

WWI

**From Vaughan Williams to Schoenberg,
the composers whose music was
shaped by the horrors of war**



THE PROMS 2014

- *Sir Neville Marriner at 90*
- *Sir John Tavener premiere*
- *Sakari Oramo on the Last Night*
- *Full listings and broadcast details*

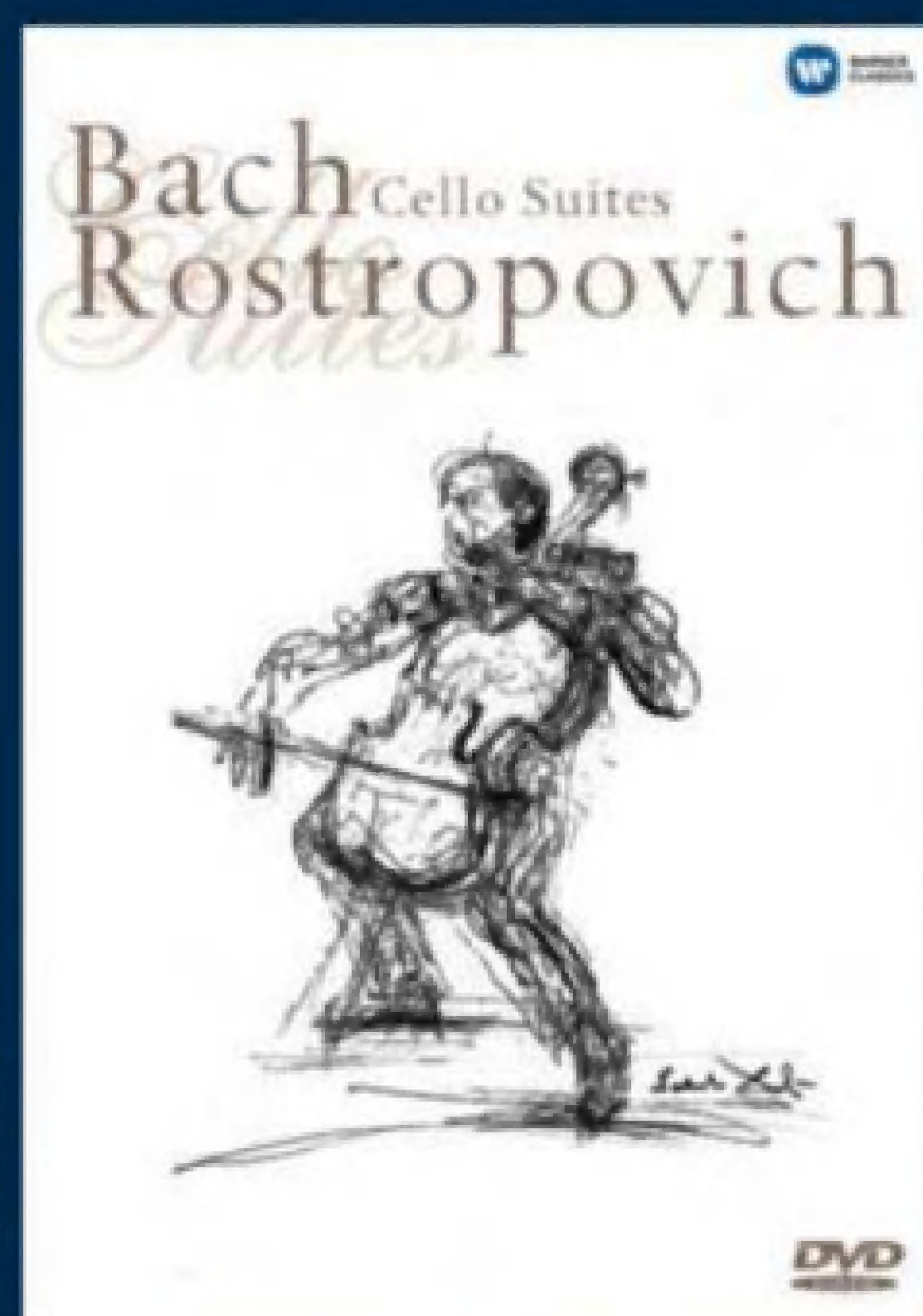
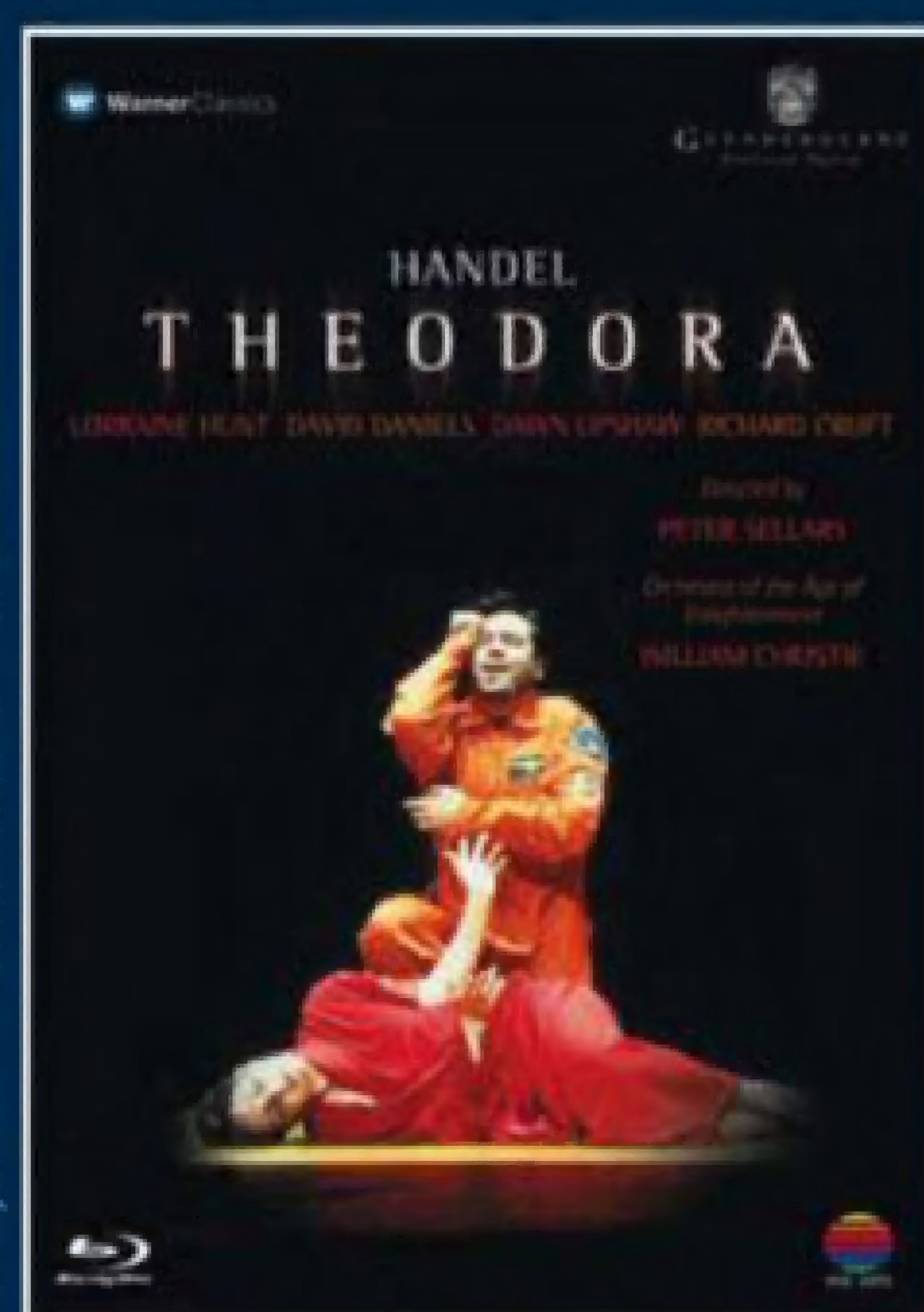
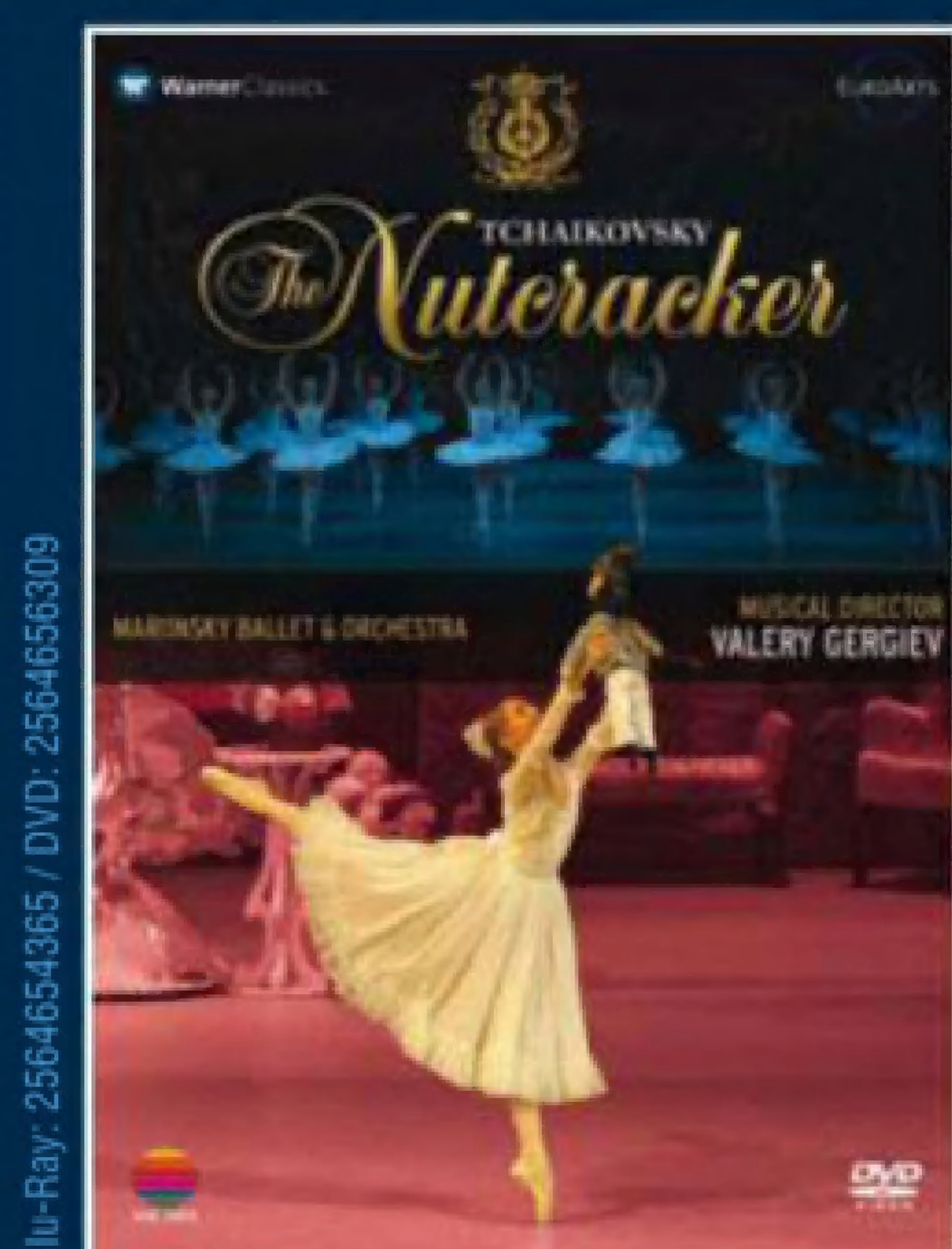




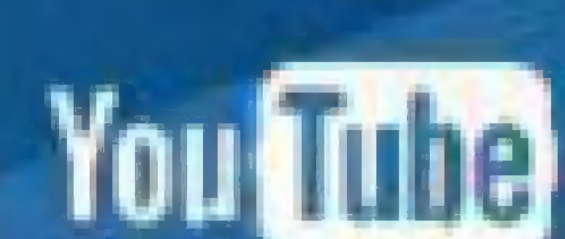
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GRAMOPHONE

US & CANADA SOUNDS OF AMERICA

RECORDINGS & EVENTS *A special eight-page section for readers in the US and Canada*

Bartók · Hindemith · Prokofiev

'Miraculous Metamorphoses'

Bartók The Miraculous Mandarin, Sz73 – Suite

Hindemith Symphonic Metamorphosis on

Themes of Weber **Prokofiev** The Love for

Three Oranges – Suite

Kansas City Symphony Orchestra / Michael Stern

Reference Recordings © RR132 (55' • DDD)



The Kansas City Symphony have been on a roll with Michael Stern, the ensemble's

Music Director since 2005. Along with their move into an acclaimed modern venue, they've been featured on several admired recordings. The newest is 'Miraculous Metamorphoses', a programme of 20th-century masterpieces from the opera, ballet and orchestral repertoires.

These are works that provide conductor and musicians with a spectrum of atmospheres and colours into which they can sink their respective teeth. Stern and his orchestra do so to captivating effect, without resorting to sonic exaggeration. Hindemith's *Symphonic Metamorphosis on Themes of Weber* has tonal splendour to spare but it also receives a detailed account full of subtle gestures and disciplined ensemble.

Stern savours the biting satire in Prokofiev's suite from *The Love for Three Oranges*, a fantastical opera in which a morose prince falls for the eponymous citrus, which are filled with lovely princesses. The suite is among the composer's ziest inventions and the Kansas City contingent make vibrant business of the score's whimsies and hues.

Savagery dominates the narrative in Bartók's suite from the ballet *The Miraculous Mandarin*, and there's no shortage of vehemence in Stern's account. The solo clarinet brilliantly essays the girl's seductive machinations and the orchestra enter into the violent spirit of things with fierce sophistication. The recorded sound is a bit distant, so it helps to turn the volume up to gain the full impact of this searing performance. **Donald Rosenberg**

GRAMOPHONE talks to...

Richard Danielpour

The composer on his powerful oratorio *Toward a Season of Peace*

How was this momentous work conceived?

I was composer-in-residence of the Pacific Symphony until 2001, and they asked me if I would write a work for the Persian New Year. I said yes, if I could represent the three religions of Iran – Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

What is your connection with Iran?

I was born in the US but as a child we moved to Iran for a year, where I became very ill. My mother is a sculptress and was commissioned by the Shah of Iran – she was going back and forth to Iran and then the revolution hit. There was the hostage crisis, I had an uncle who was executed...all these things made me want to want to keep my distance. But through poetry, I started revisiting my ancestral DNA.

There is singing in three languages...

The chorus sing mostly in Hebrew and Arabic – they don't sing in English until the



Apotheosis, as if to say, 'Now we understand'. The soprano, singing an English translation of Rumi by Rafiq Abdulla, is a mentor to them.

How does the orchestra sound Persian?

I used my childhood memories of the sounds I encountered in Iran. And I would do things with the instruments to make them sound less Western. I also used North African drums.

What was the reaction at the premiere?

There was an understanding that this was about building bridges, and a sense of relief that everyone could put their differences aside and come together as one human family.

Danielpour

Toward a Season of Peace

Hila Plitmann sop **Pacific Chorale;**

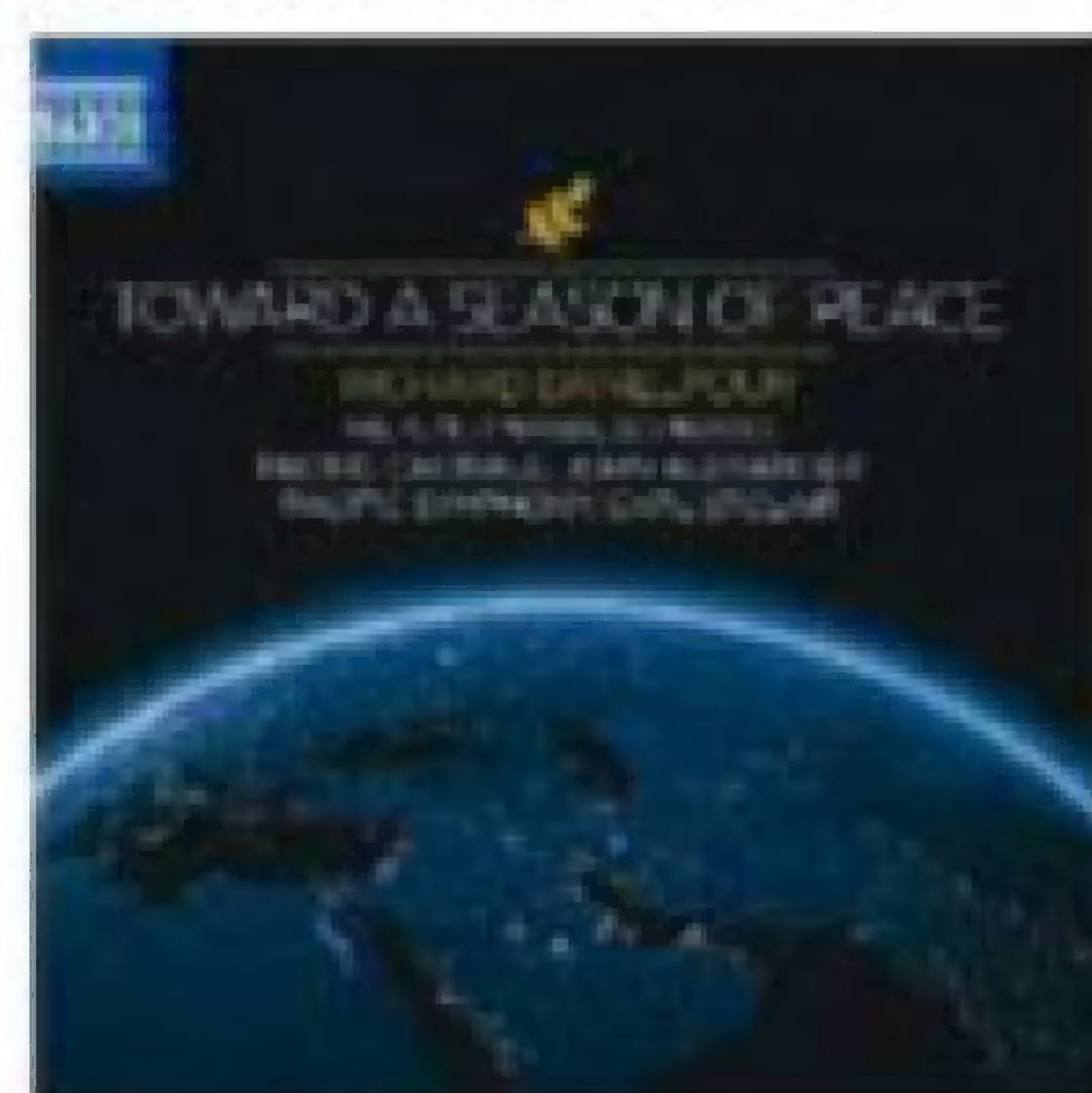
Pacific Symphony Orchestra / Carl St Clair

Naxos American Classics © 8 559772

(51' • DDD • T/t). Recorded live at the

Segerstrom Center for the Arts, Costa Mesa, CA,

March 23-25, 2012



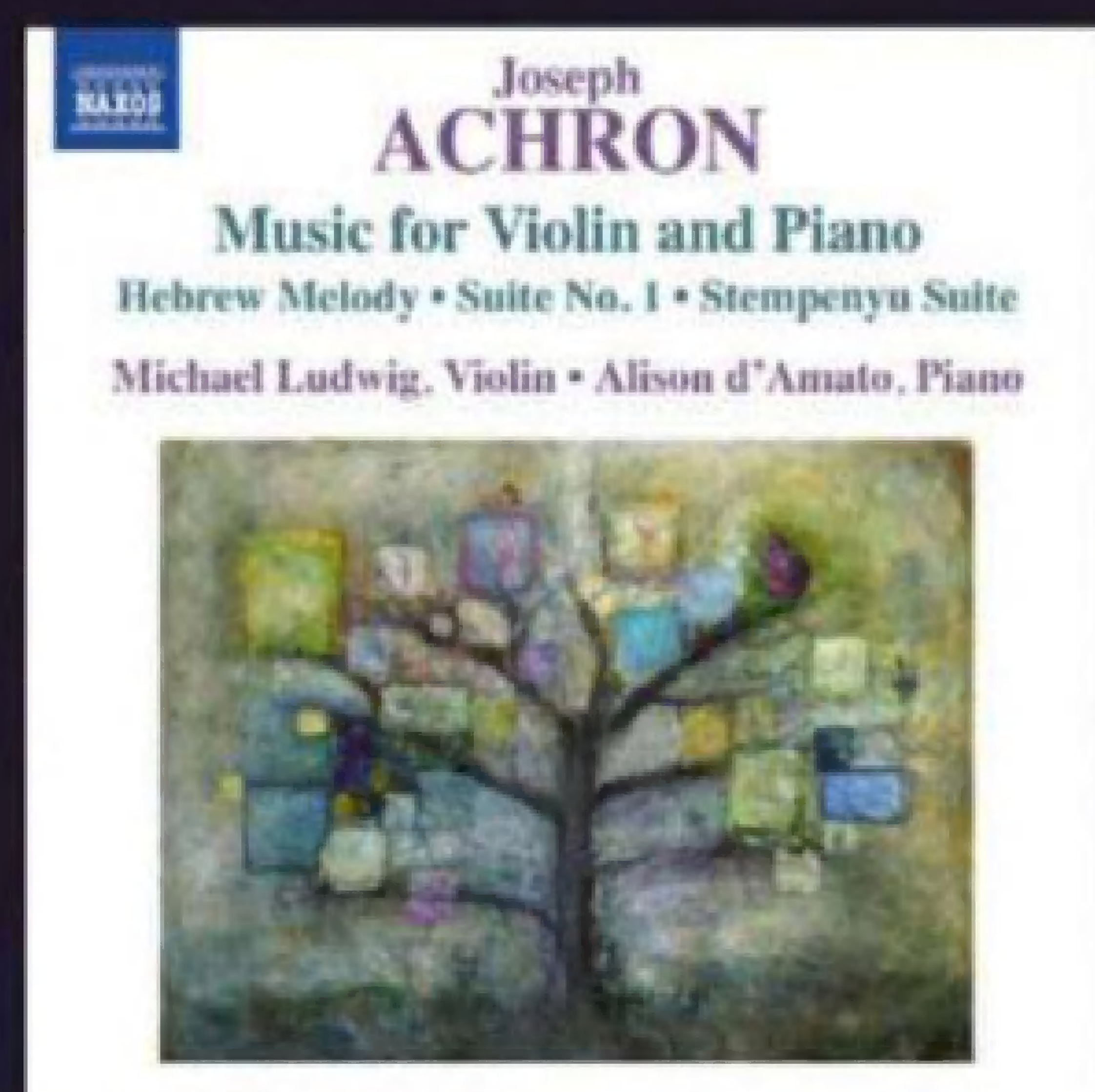
Richard Danielpour's *Toward a Season of Peace*, set to Hebrew, Arabic, Aramaic, Farsi

and English texts including poems by the Persian poet Rumi, conveys its message in a series of spectacular set pieces which could have been lifted in Technicolor tone and spirit from Hollywood's biblical epics of the

1950s: glittering, lush and at times barbaric. Danielpour's exotically tinged melodic invention throughout, however, is purely the work of the Iranian-born American's rich diversity of musical heritages.

Moving from war and destruction to peace through forgiveness by way of Ecclesiastes and the Lord's Prayer generates a lot of world-class virtuoso playing from the Pacific Symphony and lusty singing from the Chorale. On the podium, Carl St Clair is expert as always at articulating a score deftly and with maximum impact. There is a sense of moment to the playing, perhaps because the recording was made during the world premiere performances at the Symphony's home base in March 2012, celebrating the Persian New Year.

While the power raised from Danielpour's score is massively impressive in the war and



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VOL. 2 (8572888)

ALDRIDGE

PARABLES

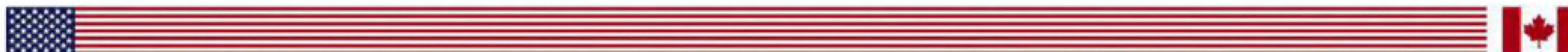
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OPERA THEATRE

"VIBRANTLY LYRICAL... TUNEFULLY ENTERTAINING AND THOUGHTFUL PIECE OF THEATER"

– **THE NEW YORK TIMES**
ON ELMER GANTRY
(8669032-33)



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On a roll: Michael Stern conducts the orchestra he's galvanised in the venue that's been built for them, the Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts in Kansas City, Missouri

destruction bits, their ability to produce gentler colours and simpler emotions also stands out. One striking example is the transition at the opening of the fourth movement, 'Atonement', from a pure, then sumptuously radiant opening at 'For everything there is a season' to a speaker-blasting passage in the double basses and cellos leading into 'A voice cries in the wilderness' that could easily become an audiophile classic. **Laurence Vittes**

Hersch

Images from a Closed Ward

Blair Quartet

Innova © INNOVA884 (42' • DDD)



Commissioned by the Blair String Quartet, who throw themselves into the recording as if not only their life but the composer's as well depended on the relentless intensity of every bar, Michael Hersch's *Images From a Closed Ward* demonstrates the extreme musical and emotional lengths to which a composer and a string quartet will go these days to maintain a serious relationship. Hersch's grim graphic quartet responding to Michael Mazur's etchings and lithographs of inmates in a Rhode Island psychiatric hospital during the early 1960s lives a separate though equally haunted life from its visual inspiration. It

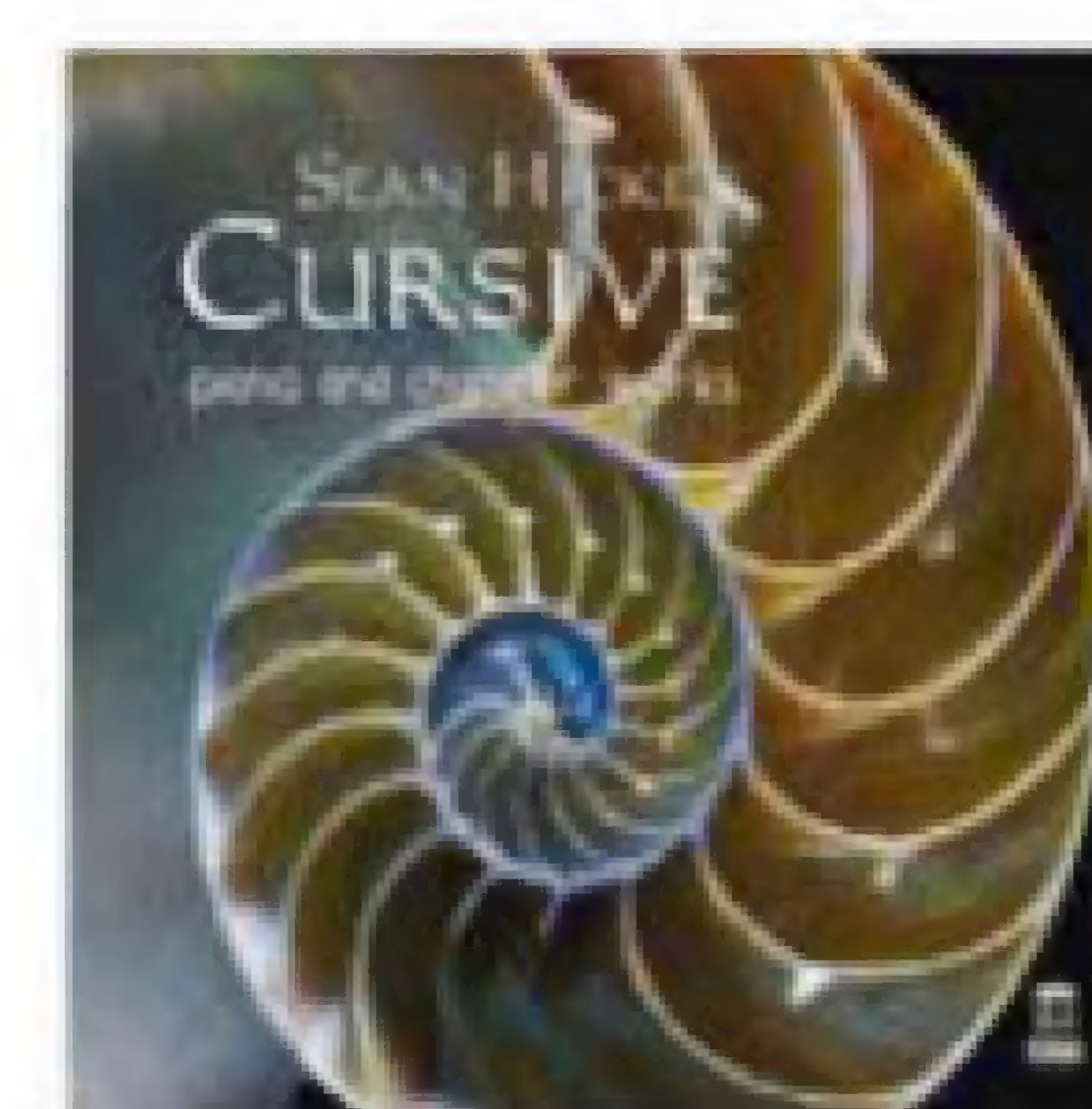
tells no narrative story, only disquieting human agony.

Although the music's searing pain and endless despair, desperately trying to escape mortality – which erupts most violently in the 10-minute 11th movement – never really subside, a radiant core seems to emerge in the third of the music's 13 untitled movements. This core leads gradually over time to the possibilities of peace through release and consolation through moments of recognisable classical harmony, hybrids of late Beethoven, Schubert and Ives. The music also features some remarkable special effects such as the eerie tuning-up and concluding cascading double-stops in movement 12, about which composers and string quartets will ask: how did he do that?

Judith Sherman produced the sessions at Vanderbilt University, where the Blairs are quartet-in-residence; her close-up, clinically precise, occasionally gritty sound adds an emotional component to their passionate laying-out of Hersch's notes. Aaron Grad's intimate, florid essay in the booklet is indispensable. **Laurence Vittes**

Hickey

Cursive. Ampersand. Dolmen. Ostinato grosso. Pied-a-terre. Reckoning. Hill Music: A Breton Ramble. The Birds of Barclay Street
Brandon Patrick George fl Julia Sakharova vn
Anne Lanzilotti va Philip Edward Fisher pf
Meredith Clark hp
 Delos © DE3465 (64' • DDD)



When not serving as national sales and business development manager of Naxos of

America, Sean Hickey is a composer of inventive and appealing works. The newest disc devoted to his music – not on the Naxos label but on Delos – shows the range of styles he incorporates with organic confidence into succinct pieces. The influences range from old masters to jazz, pop and other 20th-century sources but the music has a character of its own.

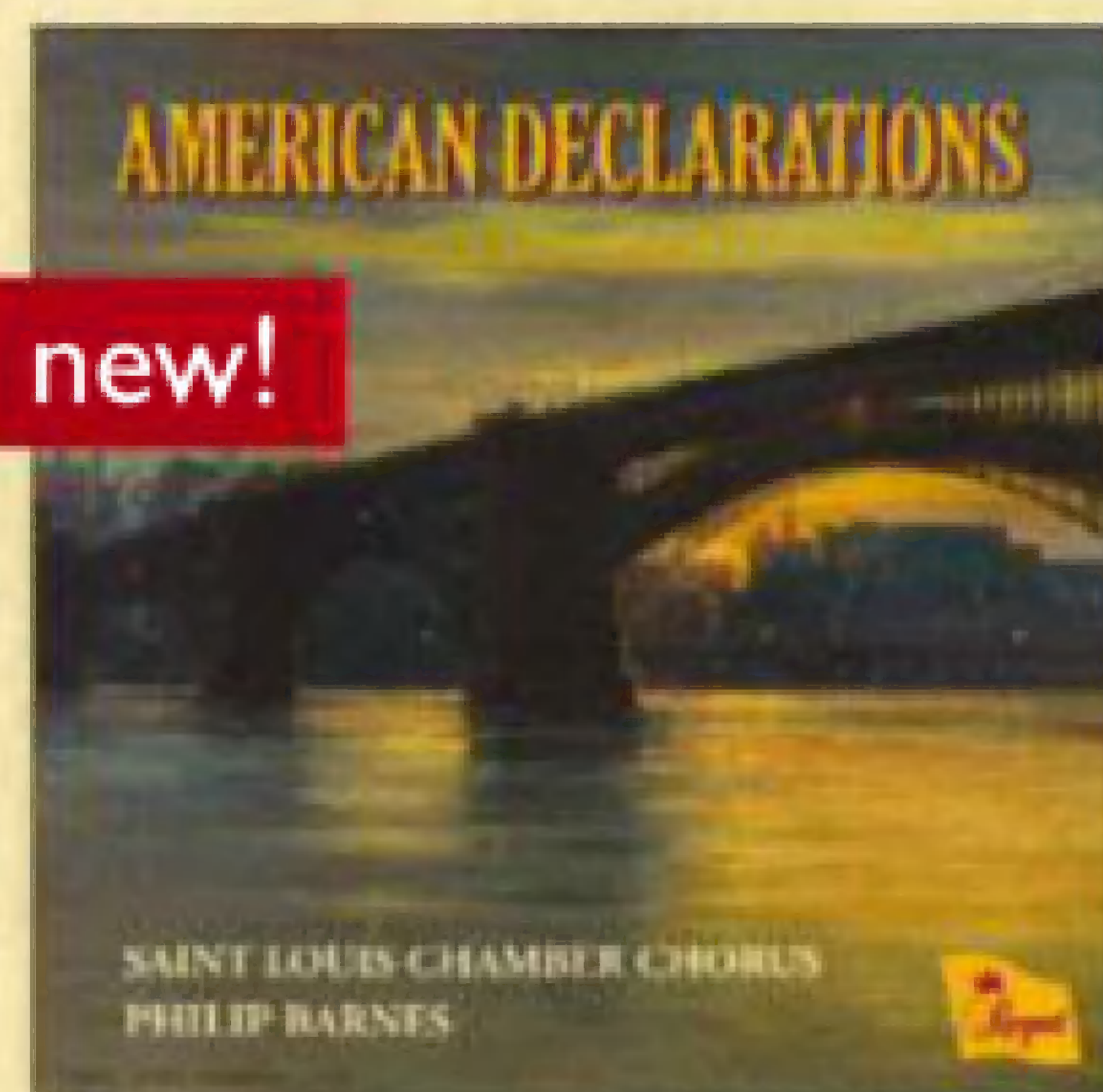
All of the works but one feature piano, for which Hickey writes with a keen ear for texture and harmonic variety. He focuses winningly on florid keyboard figurations in the opening piece, *Cursive*, which gives the disc its title. Violin joins piano in *Ampersand*, a shimmering study of instrumental relationships. More encounters of a disarming and mysterious kind are found in *Pied-a-terre*, a trio for the Debussian combination of flute, viola and harp.

Hickey travels through varied musical terrain in the remaining piano works. *Ostinato grosso* is the disc's longest work – three movements of spiky or dream-like activity that seize the ear from top to bottom. Much the same can be said of the shorter pieces, including a whiff of the Celtic in *Hill Music: A Breton Ramble* and



The Saint Louis Chamber Chorus on REGENT

'The Saint Louis Chamber Chorus is on top form'
International Record Review



new!

AMERICAN DECLARATIONS

Saint Louis Chamber Chorus
directed by Philip Barnes

Works by Dudley Buck, Miklós Rózsa, Wallingford Riegger, William Schuman, Melissa Dunphy, Bob Chilcott, William Dawson, Sven Lekberg, Stephen Paulus, Roy Harris, and Howard Helvey

The Saint Louis Chamber Chorus has become known as one of the finest chamber choirs in the US, with an enviable reputation for championing both neglected and newly-written repertoire. This major survey of American a cappella choral works covers different traditions of American chamber choirs, from the art song to the spiritual, and from a modern madrigal to a choral symphony. REGCD414

'A fascinating anthology tracing the development of a distinctive voice in American choral music. Half the items are first recordings, and the performances are consistently outstanding.' ***** BBC Music Magazine

'This is one to stay in the memory and the SLCC show what they are made of' ****
Choir & Organ

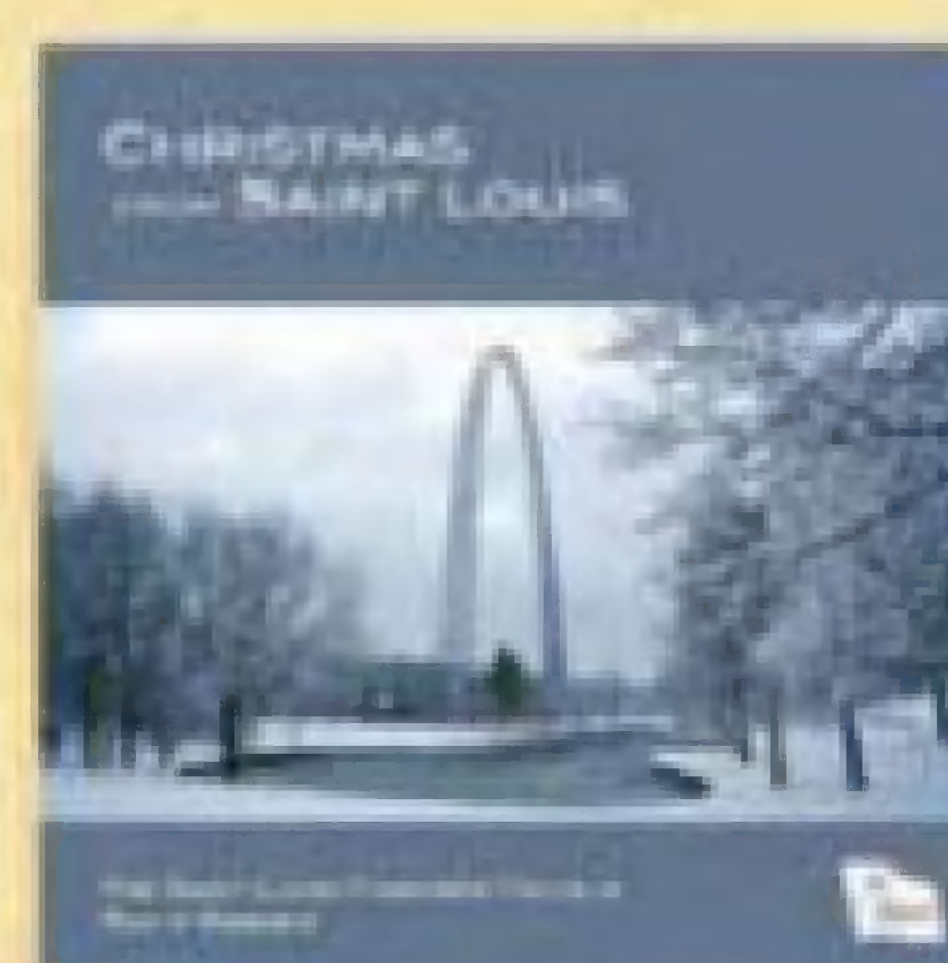
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SAINT LOUIS COMMISSIONS

Ode to Man Ned Rorem; os anthos chortou Clare Maclean; The Shepherdes Calender Judith Bingham; Requiem Sasha Johnson Manning REGCD255

'A most beguiling collection of works commissioned by this superb choir... The Saint Louis Chamber Chorus sing with polish and a full, well balanced tone throughout, caught in splendid sound' Gramophone



CHRISTMAS FROM SAINT LOUIS

Works by Virgil Thomson, Richard Storrs Willis, Patrick Zuk, Martha Shaffer, Philip Barnes, Lewis Redner, Clare Maclean, James Murray, Tchaikovsky, Yakov Gubanov, Sasha Johnson Manning, John Henry Hopkins, Jr., David Bednall REGCD373



A PAGEANT OF HUMAN LIFE

The Choral Music of Granville Bantock

British composer Granville Bantock is a forgotten Victorian master, whose late Romantic musical language overlaid with a touch of oriental exoticism captures the spirit of his age. This disc features a cross-section of his output for unaccompanied women's, men's, and mixed voices, including many first recordings and several works specifically edited for this recording. REGCD310

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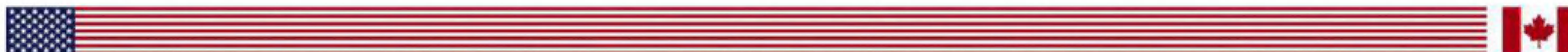
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Tracy Silverman, centre, and members of the Calder Quartet performing the composer's 'sort of Pictures at an Exhibition', Between the Kiss and the Chaos

a touching response to 9/11, *The Birds of Barclay Street*.

The performances are exemplary, especially those in which pianist Philip Edward Fisher reveals artistry of penetrating intensity and poetry. Whatever challenge Hickey sets before him, Fisher plays to the expressive and technical edge.

Donald Rosenberg

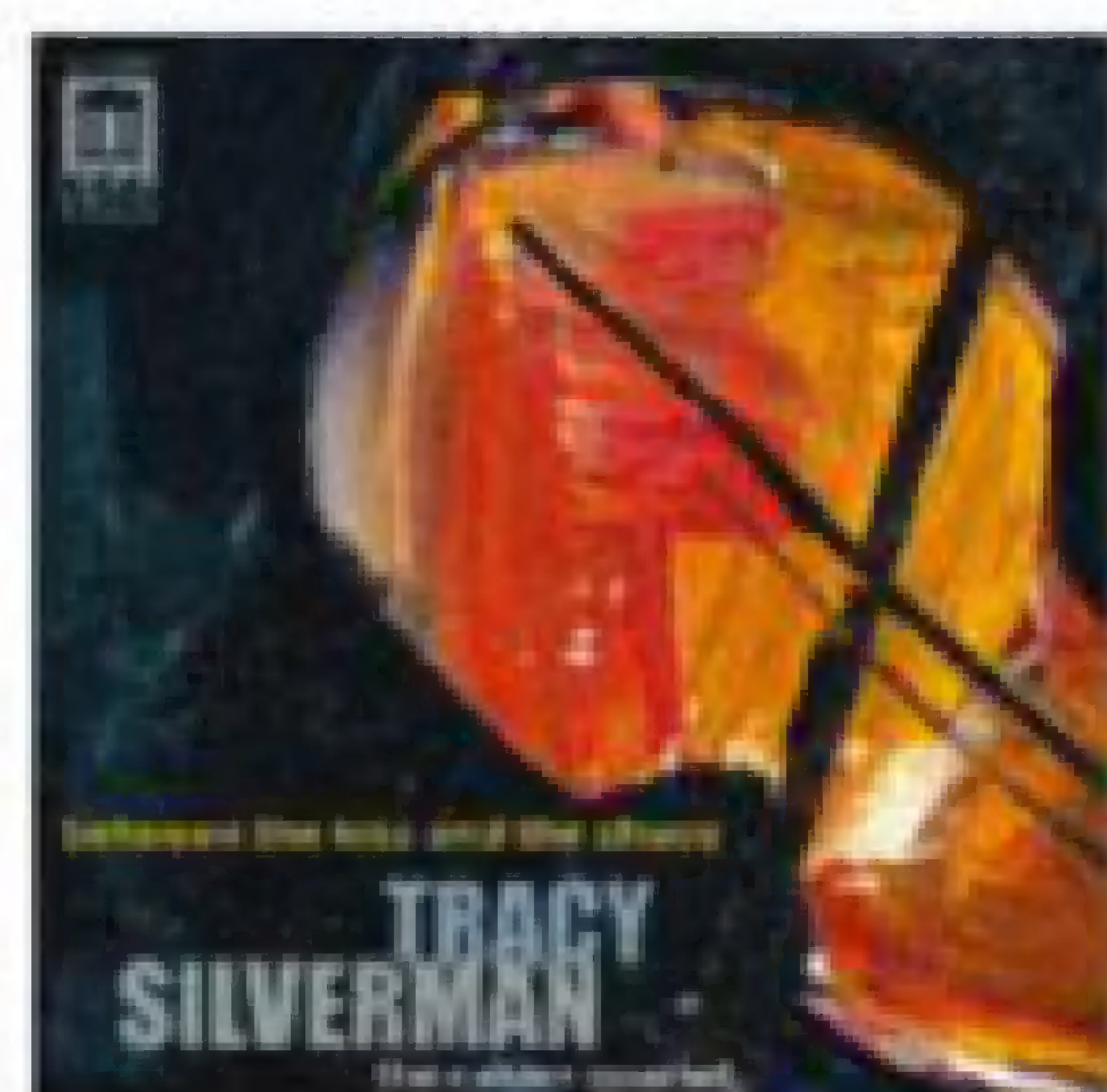
Silverman

Between the Kiss and the Chaos^a.

Axis and Orbits

Tracy Silverman *elec vn*^a Calder Qt

Delos © DE3439 (57' • DDD)



Tracy Silverman scales ambitious heights with a kickstarter.com-funded recording of

his five-movement concerto for six-string electric violin and string quartet, *Between the Kiss and the Chaos*, which he hopefully calls 'a sort of *Pictures at an Exhibition*'. Responding to iconic masterpieces by Michelangelo, Matisse, O'Keefe, Van Gogh and Picasso, with a title that refers to 'the conflict between the initial kiss of inspiration and the compulsive chaos that comes to those desperate for perfection', Silverman is most convincing when he is passionately wailing away, as in 'Van Gogh: The Starry Night'. In the concluding 'Picasso: Guernica' the resourceful Silverman challenges his audience by striking directly at their worst fears, having to endure actual physical pain from terrible plucked, strummed and

squeaked noises; but only for 10 seconds, after which some really gorgeous sounds emerge, although ultimately the movement flames out, perhaps too long at 13'24".

Kiss and the Chaos is coupled with the four movements of Silverman's more polished, more meditative *Axis and Orbits* for electric violin and loop pedal, which uses various amounts of synchronisation to tickle the auditory senses; the most impressive, 'Sacred Geometry', based on crickets Silverman heard in Brazil, uses unsynchronised loops called 'cricket moons' to produce 10 minutes of habit-forming, arpeggiating threads.

The charismatic Silverman, who played John Adams's *The Dharma at Big Sur* at the gala opening of Walt Disney Hall in 2003, enlisted the LA-based Calder Quartet, who themselves are pretty hot. **Laurence Vittes**

'American Declarations'

Buck Hymn to Music **Dunphy** What do you think I fought for at Omaha Beach? **R Harris**

Symphony for Voices **Helvey** Three Teasdale

Madrigals - Sunset: St Louis **US Kay** A Lincoln

Letter **Lekberg** Lament **Paulus** Stabat mater

Riegger Evil shall not prevail, Op 48 **Rózsa** The

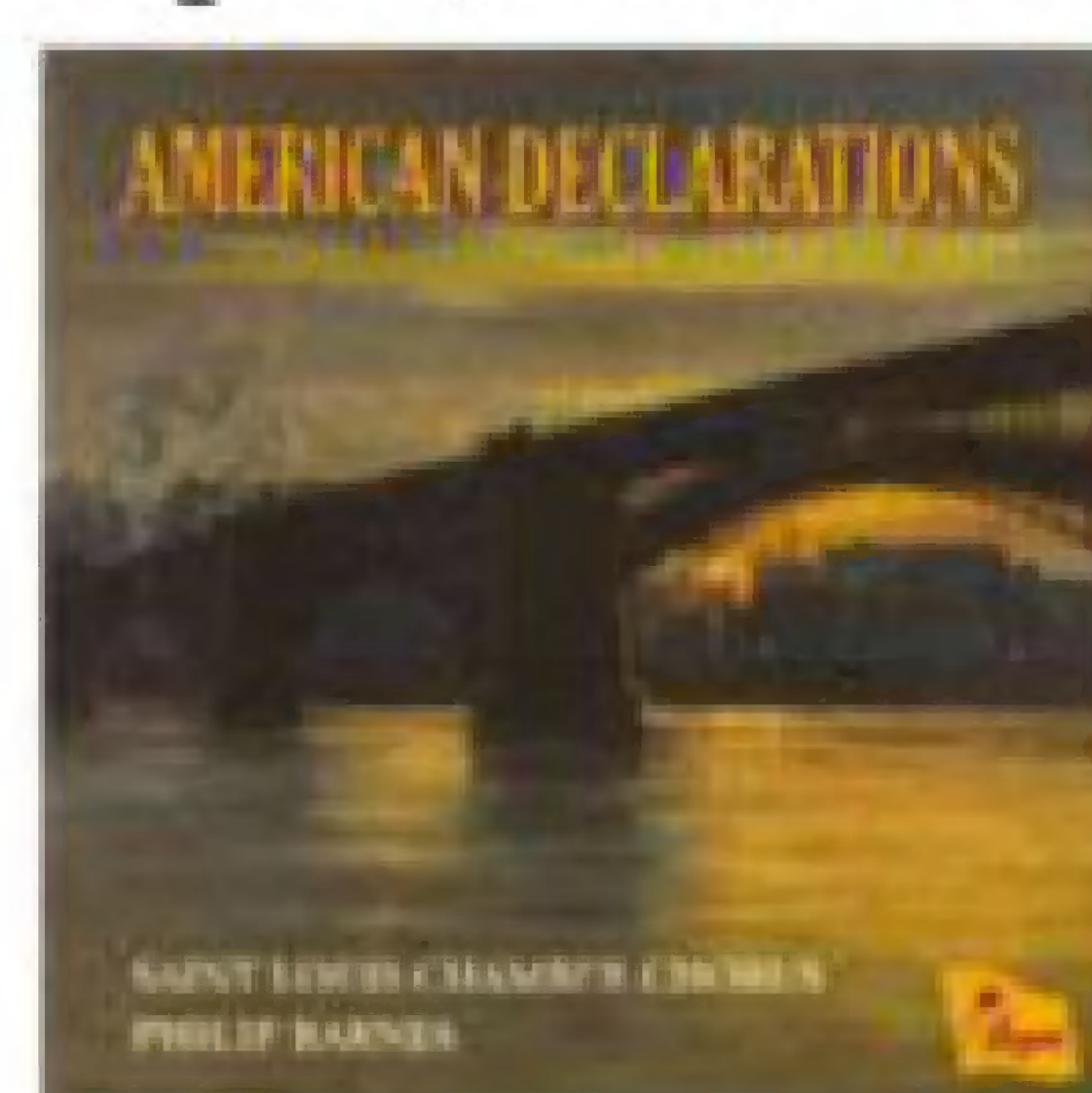
Lord is my shepherd, Op 34 **Schuman**

Declaration Chorale **Traditional** There is a balm

in Gilead (arr Dawson) **U2** MLK (arr Chilcott)

Saint Louis Chamber Chorus / Philip Barnes

Regent © REGCD414 (79' • DDD)



There are enough stirring works on 'American Declarations', the

new disc from the Saint Louis Chamber Chorus, to compel a listener to pledge allegiance to a *cappella* choral music born in the USA. Not all of the composers make patriotic statements in their pieces; some of the scores are set to sacred texts. But a good number of the 12 works, including Roy Harris's lustrous three-movement *Symphony for Voices*, evoke the spirit of the nation through historical subjects or settings of verses by American poets.

The repertoire is especially welcome for its depth of feeling and superb craftsmanship. Beyond that, most of the music is probably unknown to any but choral aficionados, which makes the disc a treasure chest of discoveries. And it's heartening to know that living composers are contributing generously to the literature for chorus. Stephen Paulus's soaring *Stabat mater* is a standout, while works by Melissa Dunphy, Sven Lekberg and Howard Helvey also seize attention for their rich delineation of materials.

Several of the composers are familiar for work in other genres, such as the Hungarian-born Miklós Rózsa, best known as a film composer but also masterly with massed voices, as in his fervent setting of *The Lord is my shepherd*. William Schuman, Wallingford Riegger and Ulysses S Kay are represented, as are the Irish rock band U2 in a mesmerising Bob Chilcott arrangement of 'MLK'.

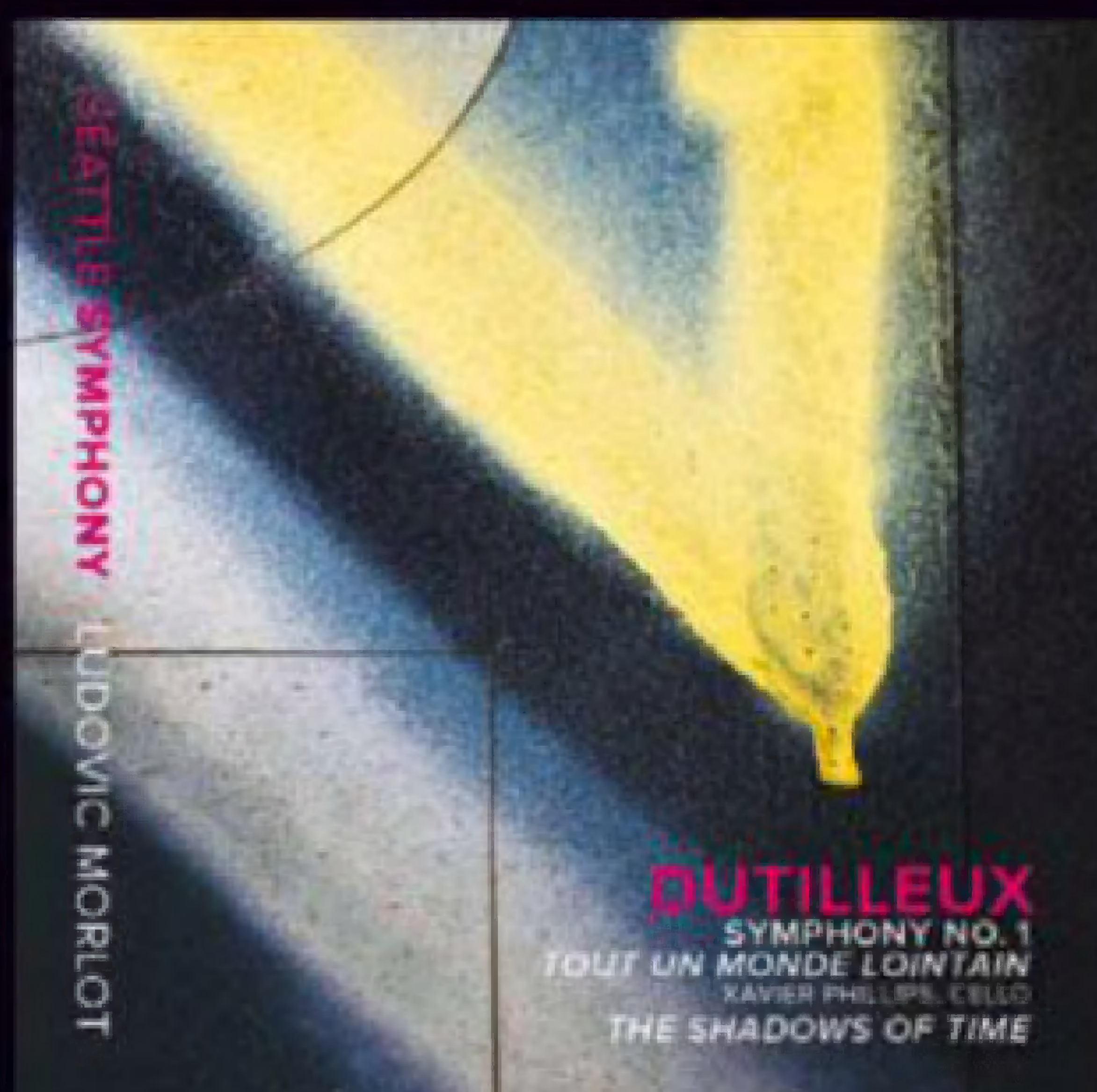
The Saint Louis Chamber Chorus, led by Philip Barnes, perform everything with consummate attention to blend, clarity and expressive nuance.

Donald Rosenberg

SEATTLE SYMPHONY MEDIA

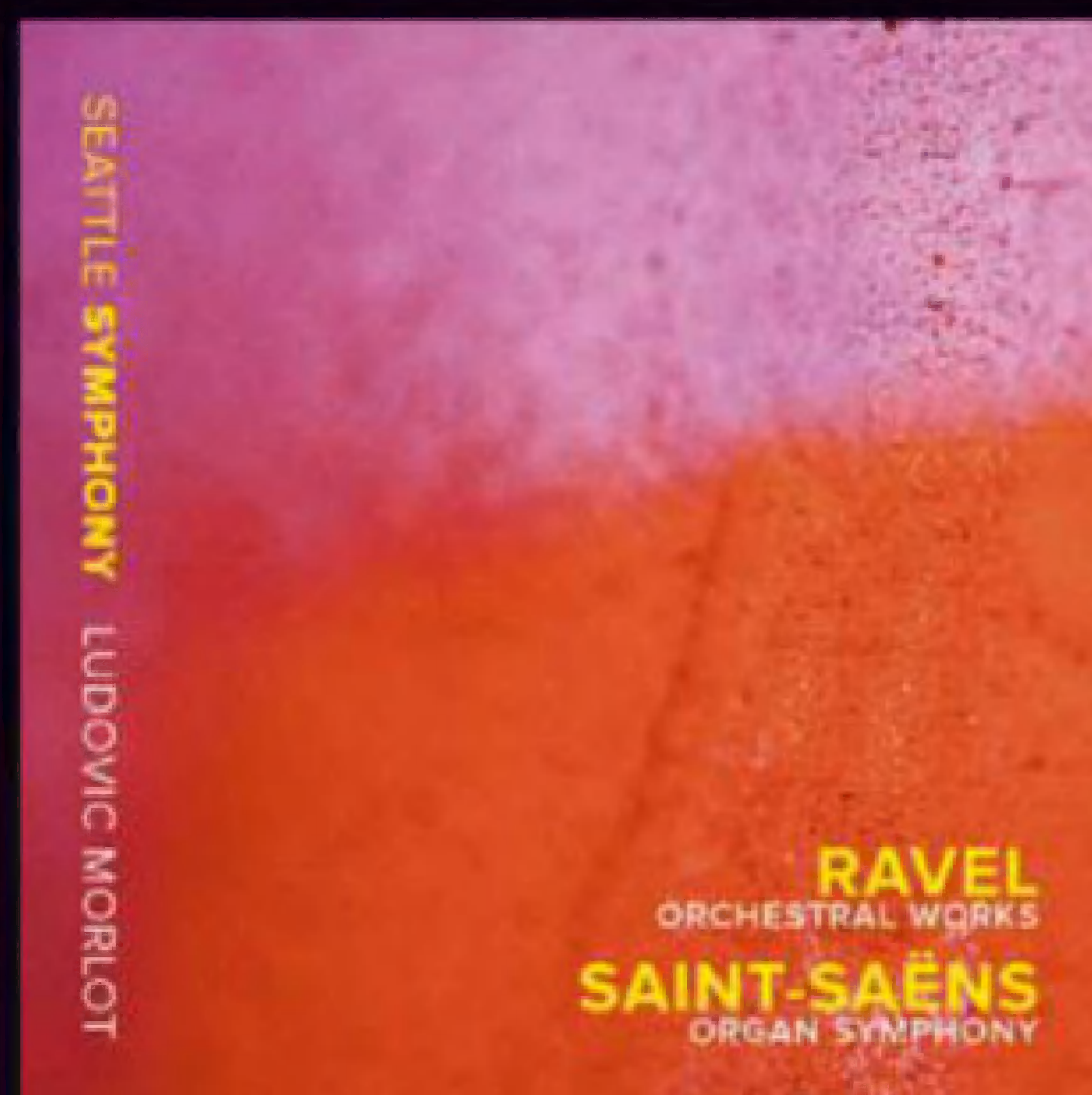
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Xavier Phillips, cello
The Shadows of Time



RAVEL

Alborada del gracioso
Pavane pour une infante défunte
Rapsodie espagnole

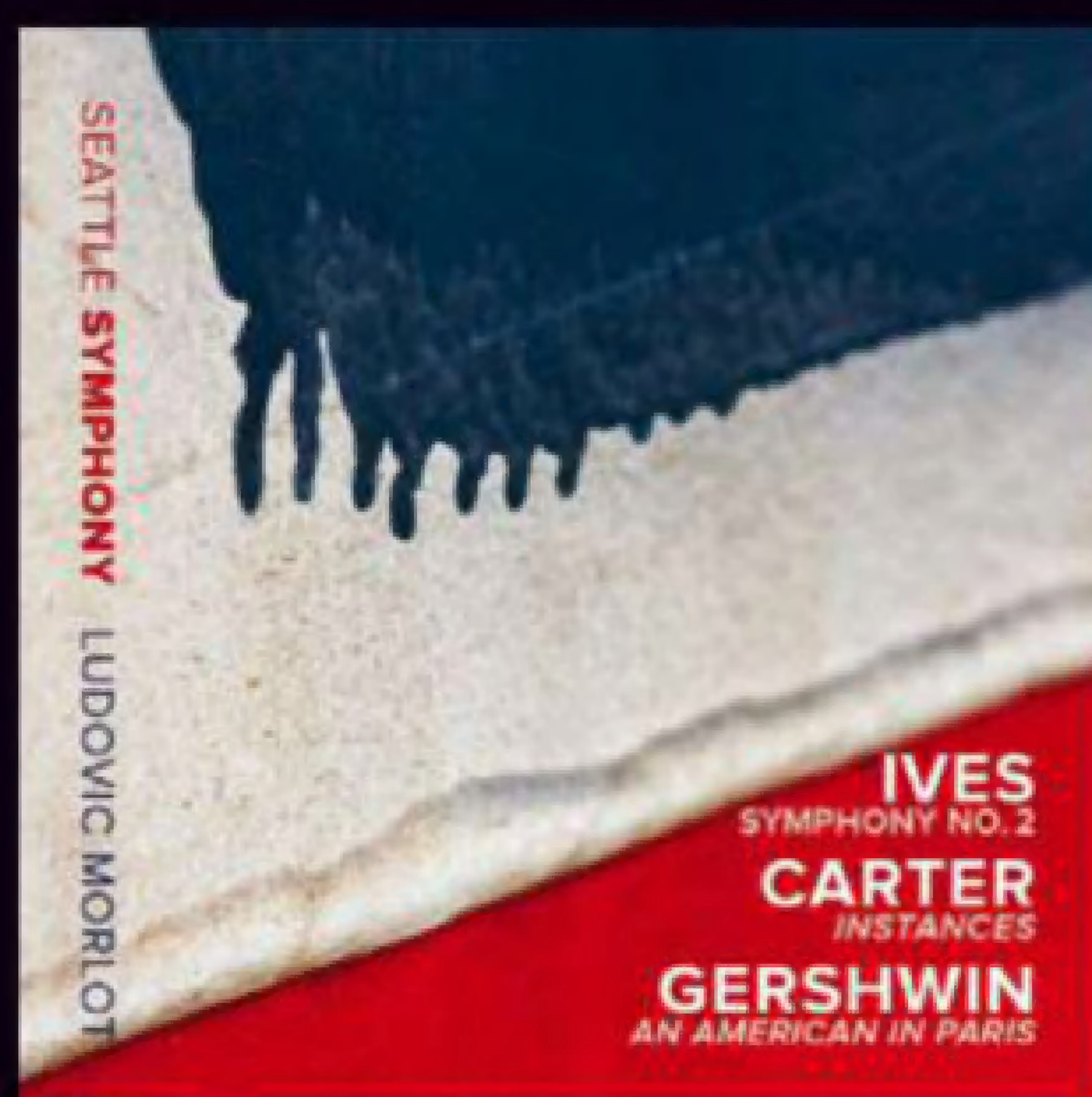
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Symphony No. 3 in C minor,
Op. 78, "Organ"

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THE SCENE

New music abounds at California's Cabrillo Festival, Andrés Orozco-Estrada takes the helm at Houston, Sondra Radvanovsky revisits *Norma* in San Francisco and Mostly Mozart concludes with the Requiem

SANTA CRUZ, CA

Cabrillo Festival of Contemporary Music
Music Director Marin Alsop (July 27 – Aug 10)

Led by Music Director and conductor Marin Alsop, the festival celebrates its 52nd season with three world premieres, two US premieres and four West Coast premieres. The adventurous spirit of the event is reflected in the 13 resident composers selected to take part, who run the gamut from emerging names (TJ Cole, Gabriella Smith, Dylan Mattingly) to returning favourites (John Adams, Jennifer Higdon and Brett Dean). This season celebrates music featuring instruments 'atypical to the classical repertoire', including Béla Fleck's Banjo Concerto, Adams's Saxophone Concerto, and a large-scale symphonic work by Mark-Anthony Turnage which uses the *duduk* and the cimbalom.

cabrillomusic.org

NEW YORK, NY

Mostly Mozart
Mozart: Requiem (Aug 22 & 23)

Lincoln Center's Mostly Mozart festival comes to a dramatic close with a presentation of Mozart's Requiem, with world-class soloists Susanna Phillips (soprano), Kelly O'Connor (mezzo), Dimitri Pittas (tenor) and Morris Robinson (bass). Intriguingly, the Mozart is preceded by Frank Martin's violin concerto, *Polyptyque: Six Images of the Passion of Christ*, which echoes the Requiem's themes. The Moldovan violinist Patricia Kopatchinskaja is the soloist, with Louis Langrée leading the Mostly Mozart Festival Orchestra.

mostlymozart.org

SAN FRANCISCO, CA

San Francisco Opera
Bellini: Norma (Sep 5, 10, 14, 19, 23, 27 & 30)

Sondra Radvanovsky has described the character of Norma as her ideal role, declaring it suits her vocally and temperamentally. When she sang it at the Met last year, she wowed the audience and the critics with her performance. Although known for specialising in Verdi, Radvanovsky has proved herself adept at the lightness and ease necessary to execute the nimble phrasing required of *bel canto* parts. Here's another opportunity to witness this remarkable American soprano sing the role in a new production, with Nicola Luisotti in the pit.

sfopera.com

EVENT OF THE MONTH



MOAB, UT

Moab Music Festival
Chamber, folk, and jazz
(August 28–September 8)

The Moab Music Festival, founded in 1992, uses the tag line 'music in concert with the landscape'. That's no idle boast. Many of the concerts are set amidst the vast wilderness of the nearby Arches and Canyonlands national parks. Using the natural acoustics of rock formations, the festival offers a range of

chamber music played by top-notch ensembles; programmes might include anything from a Messiaen horn solo to a Brahms piano quartet. There are also concert hikes to wilderness locations. In addition to the classical chamber works, there's folk and jazz music on offer. This year's guest artists include a virtuoso Colombian jazz harpist, Edmar Casteneda, and his quartet, and the John Pizzarelli Quartet.

moabmusicfest.org

WASHINGTON, DC

Kennedy Center
Costello-Pérez start concert tour (Sep 10)

Soprano Ailyn Pérez and tenor Stephen Costello have proved to be a harmonious match as the only husband and wife to have each won the prestigious Richard Tucker Award. The couple perform the first of two US concerts featuring selections from their debut album, 'Love Duets', including works by Puccini, Massenet, Bernstein and Mascagni. The second concert is in Philadelphia (Sep 12).

kennedy-center.org

HOUSTON, TX

Houston Symphony
Inaugural weekend for new Music Director Andrés Orozco-Estrada (Sep 12–14)

Houston Symphony welcomes Andrés Orozco-Estrada with a weekend-long celebration. The 36-year-old, who succeeds Hans Graf after 12 years, is the orchestra's first Hispanic leader. Born in Medellín, Colombia, Orozco-Estrada studied in Vienna and found success as principal conductor of the Tonkünstler Orchestra. He kicks off his first Houston season with a free concert of music from Colombia and the US, including Gershwin's

Rhapsody in Blue with Venezuelan pianist Gabriela Montero. The official opening night features the overture to Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro*, Haydn's Trumpet Concerto with Alison Balsom, and Ravel's dazzling orchestration of Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition*.

houstonSymphony.org

SAINT PAUL, MN

Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra
Beethoven: Symphonies Nos 7 and 8 (Sep 13)

A complete Beethoven symphony cycle marks 30 years of the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra performing at the Ordway Music Theater. For the Opening Night series, Nos 7 and 8 are on the programme; sandwiched in between these two monumental works is the world premiere of Nicola Campogrande's *Urban Gardens*. According to the Italian composer, the three-movement score, with playful and evocative dialogue between the piano and the orchestra, is inspired by the urban gardens that are found in our cities. Roberto Abbado conducts, with a repeat of the programme in Minneapolis on the following day.

thespco.org

Previews by Damian Fowler

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'Today's ideas turn into tomorrow's initiatives'

During the month of May, a team from *Gramophone* travelled to Vienna for a conference called Classical:NEXT. Record labels, distributors, artists and journalists spent several days in meetings, exchanging ideas, concerns and release schedules. Such events are a good moment to take stock of what's happening in the recording industry, and to ponder the future. Today's ideas turn into tomorrow's initiatives.

This year felt – refreshingly, for it has been a difficult few years for classical recording – rather upbeat. Sales of CDs have been declining for a number of years now, but labels seem to have adjusted to the new reality and seem confident in their current business models (I make no apologies for sounding so corporate, a label has to think like a business to survive). Physical releases will not be going away any time soon.

Downloading, however, has also become a solid part of most companies' sales and plans, with some impressive successes when a particular release has resonated widely, and high-resolution downloading is capturing the interest of a growing market.

The big unknown is streaming. As discussed in this column before, streaming – be it through the already established giant Spotify, or relative newcomer Qobuz, who we're delighted to welcome this month as supporters of our Artist of the Year Award – is here to stay, and for many people, particularly the youngest generation of listeners, it's now the main way they choose to access music. Record companies and retailers are debating how to adjust to this and how to find, collectively, an approach that works.



Martin

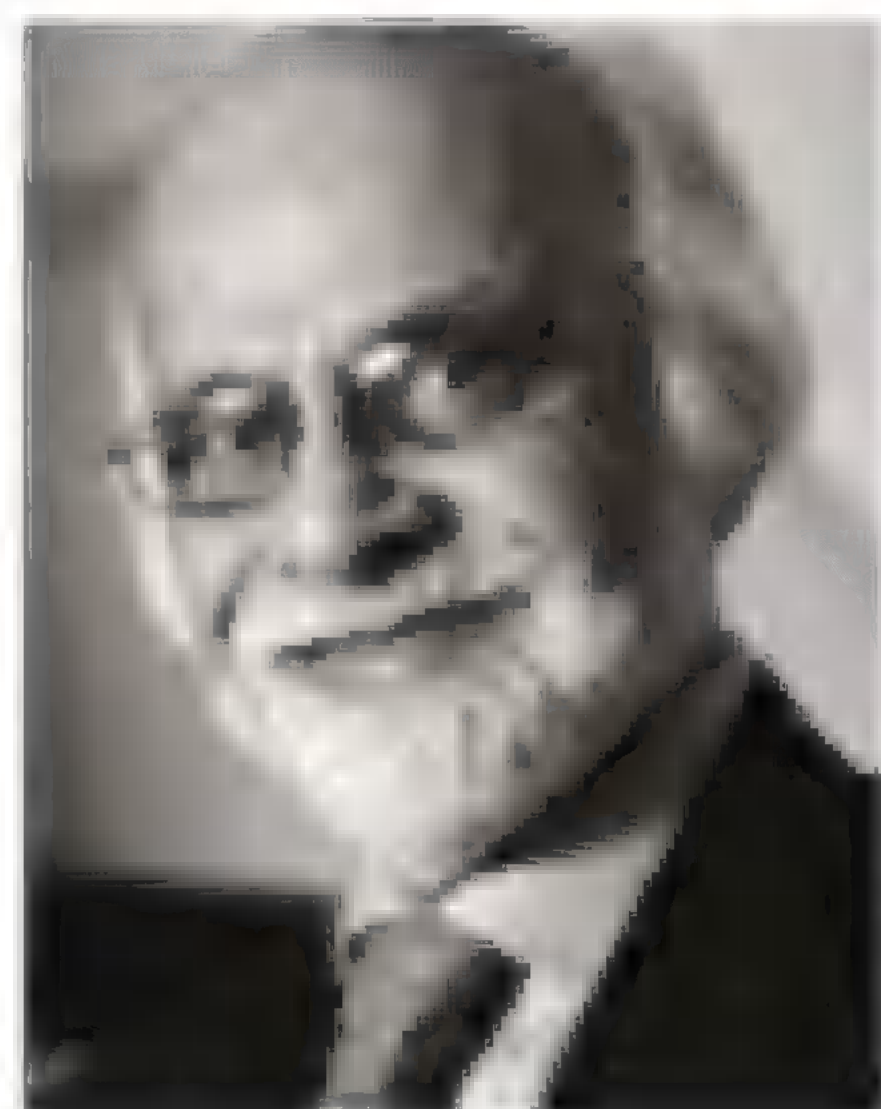
In the meantime, many are making the most of the opportunities to reach listeners who might not otherwise have bought a classical record anyway. Traditionally, the recording industry has always been creative in the way new realities are addressed: streaming is today's challenging new reality, and from a number of conversations I had in Vienna I think we can expect to be reporting on some interesting attempts at addressing it in the months ahead.

But what was most heartening was meeting label after label with recording and release schedules rich in imaginative pairings of artist and repertoire. Put aside the way the music reaches the listener for the moment, and I imagine such conversations bear a remarkable similarity to that of decades past. Label executives with excellent ears and a dose of courage pushing our expectations, signing new talent, and packaging the whole beautifully. Musicians applying their art to repertoire both familiar and unfamiliar, enriching our appreciation and understanding of music we already know, and taking us on fascinating journeys of discovery.

We've chosen 10 such artists for the shortlist of this year's Artist of the Year, the one *Gramophone* Award that we invite you, our readers, to vote on. Take a look at our feature on page 28 and let us know which artist you feel has really contributed something very special to classical music this year. And while you're doing that, our critics will be busy listening to the hundreds of discs in contention for the category awards, more of which soon...

martin.cullingford@markallengroup.com

THIS MONTH'S CONTRIBUTORS



'Never in the top 10 for popularity but nonetheless a connoisseur's musician,' says **NALEN ANTHONI**

of Pierre Monteux, the subject of this month's Icons. 'For many years have I venerated the redoubtable artistry of this conductor,' he continues, 'and now I'm being afforded the privilege of saying exactly why.'



GEOFFREY NORRIS has written in this issue about the huge number of international orchestras

making their Proms debuts this season. 'The appearance at this year's Proms of so many different orchestras from all over the globe set me thinking,' he says. 'Does the old adage about an orchestra's distinctive sound still hold true?'



PHILIP CLARK is the author of this month's cover story which ties in with the WWI centenary Proms concerts. He

wanted to write a piece that approached the conflict by starting with the innocence of 1913, and then projected forwards to after the conflict. 'How did the war change music,' he asks, 'or would composers have likely changed anyway?'

THE REVIEWERS Andrew Achenbach • Nalen Anthoni • Mike Ashman • Philip Clark • Alexandra Coghlan • Rob Cowan (consultant reviewer) • Jeremy Dibble • Peter Dickinson • Jed Distler • Duncan Druce • Adrian Edwards • Richard Fairman • David Fallows • David Fanning • Iain Fenlon • Fabrice Fitch • Jonathan Freeman-Attwood • Caroline Gill • Edward Greenfield • David Gutman • Lindsay Kemp • Philip Kennicott • Tess Knighton • Richard Lawrence • Ivan March • Ivan Moody • Bryce Morrison • Jeremy Nicholas • Christopher Nickol • Geoffrey Norris • Richard Osborne • Stephen Plaistow • Peter Quantrill • Guy Rickards • Malcolm Riley • Marc Rochester • Julie Anne Sadie • Edward Seckerson • Hugo Shirley • Pwyll ap Siôn • Harriet Smith • Ken Smith • David Patrick Stearns • David Threasher • David Vickers • John Warrack • Richard Whitehouse • Arnold Whittall • Richard Wigmore • William Yeoman

Gramophone, which has been serving the classical music world since 1923, is first and foremost a monthly review magazine, delivered today in both print and digital formats. It boasts an eminent and knowledgeable panel of experts, which reviews the full range of classical music recordings. Its reviews are completely independent. In addition to reviews, its interviews and features help readers to explore in greater depth the recordings that the magazine covers, as well as offer insight into the work of composers and performers. It is *the* magazine for the classical record collector, as well as for the enthusiast starting a voyage of discovery.

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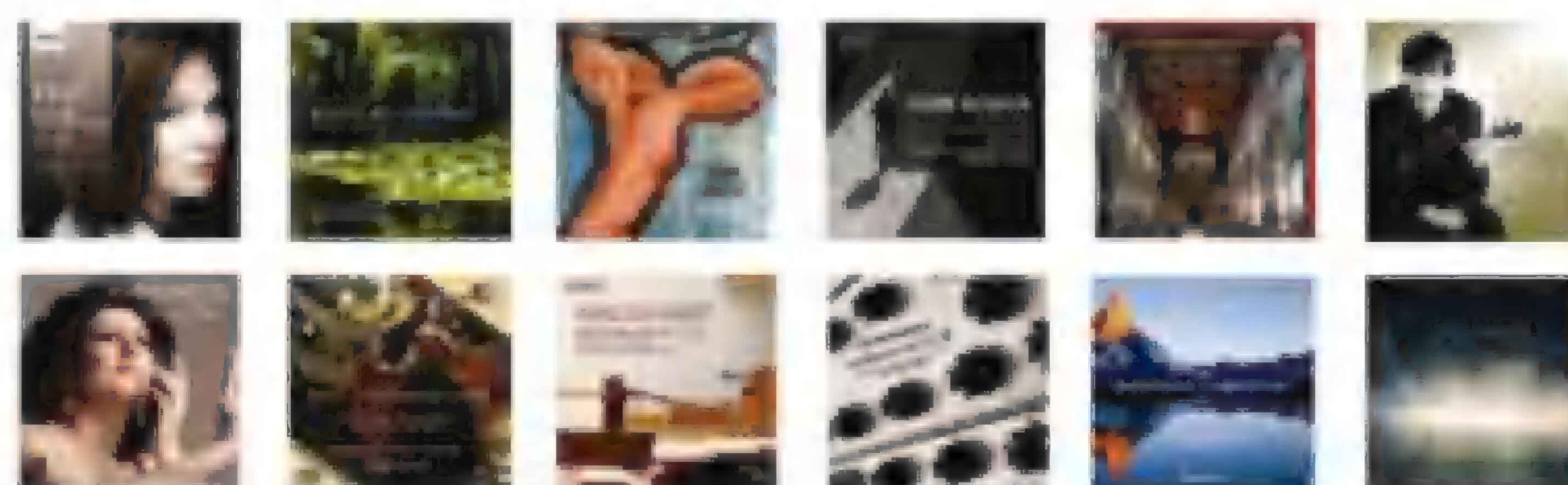
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SIR SIMON RATTLE**

ROBERT SCHUMANN
SYMPHONIES 1-4

2 CD + BLU-RAY

The Berliner Philharmoniker launch a new in-house label, Berliner Philharmoniker Recordings, to release selected future concert programmes, marking the first time the orchestra will be responsible for the technical and editorial presentation of its own recordings. The first recording on the new label is one of the Berliner Philharmoniker's most important musical projects in recent years: Robert Schumann's complete symphonies conducted by chief conductor Sir Simon Rattle. In addition to a double CD, the lavishly designed edition also includes high-resolution video and audio on Blu-ray Disc. The recording is available exclusively from the online shop of the Berliner Philharmoniker and from selected retailers.



www.berliner-philharmoniker-recordings.com

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& Special Guest Speaker Elaine Padmore - former
director of the Royal Opera Covent Garden.*



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& Simon Lepper, piano*



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The Ruisi String Quartet;
Simon Rowland-Jones, viola;
Nelly Miricioiu, soprano;
singers from The Royal Opera's
prestigious Jette Parker Young
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lecturer Elaine Padmore, former
Director of The Royal Opera.*



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FOR DISCERNING TRAVELLERS

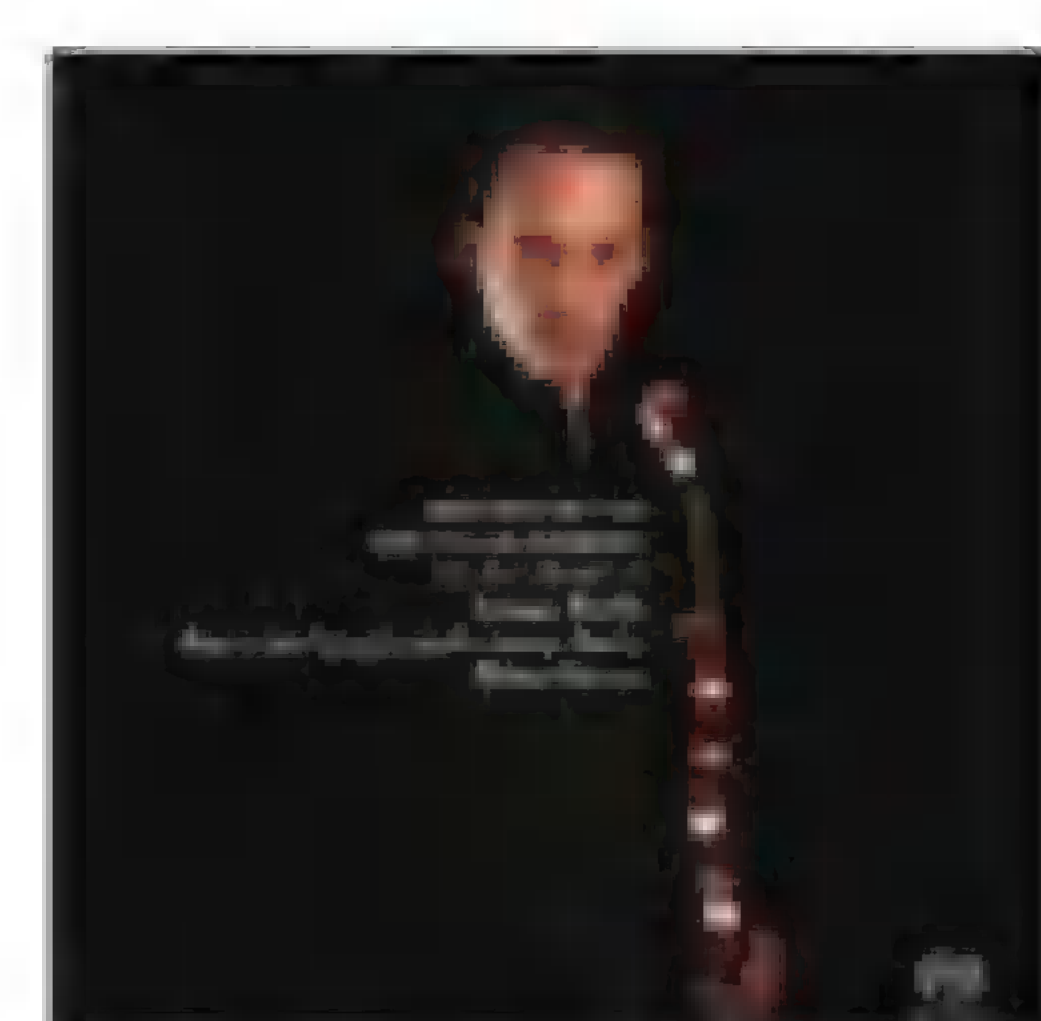
GRAMOPHONE *Editor's choice*

Martin Cullingford introduces the finest recordings from this month's reviews



WALTON
Violin Concerto.
Symphony No 1
Tasmin Little *vn*
BBC Symphony
Orchestra /
Edward Gardner
Chandos © CHSA5136
► **ANDREW
ACHENBACH'S
REVIEW IS ON
PAGE 32**

Fast establishing himself as a major interpreter of British repertoire, Edward Gardner's intense performance of Walton's Symphony No 1 is matched by the commitment and insight of Tasmin Little in the Violin Concerto.

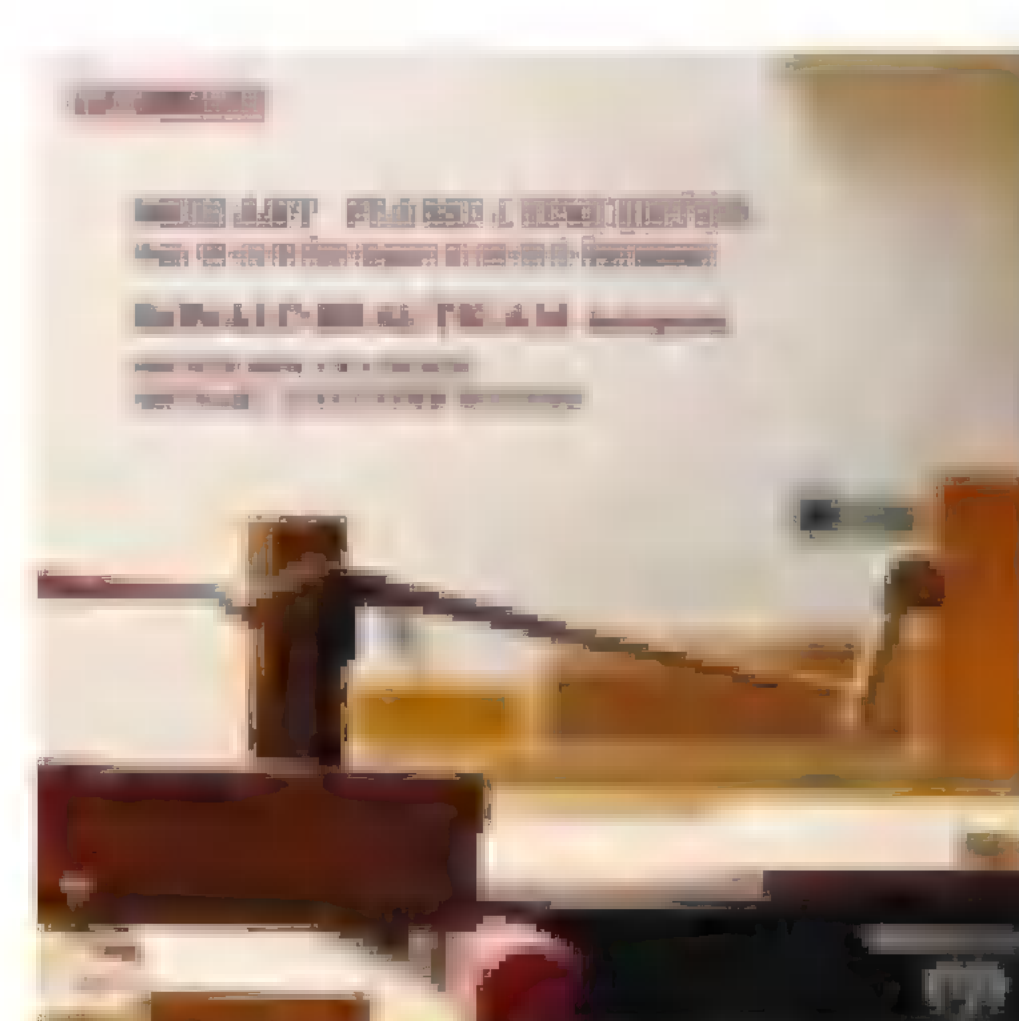


BRITTEN. WEINBERG
Violin Concertos
Linus Roth *vn* **Deutsches
Symphonie-Orchester
Berlin** / **Mihkel Kütson**
Challenge Classics

© CC72627

Linus Roth has complete command over the sometimes urgent, sometimes lyrical material in Weinberg's Concerto.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 35**



MOZART Piano
Concertos Nos 18 & 22
Ronald Brautigam *fp*
Cologne Academy /
Michael Alexander
Willens

BIS © BIS2044

Wit, panache and delightful collusions between woodwind and fortepiano distinguish Brautigam's latest Mozart.

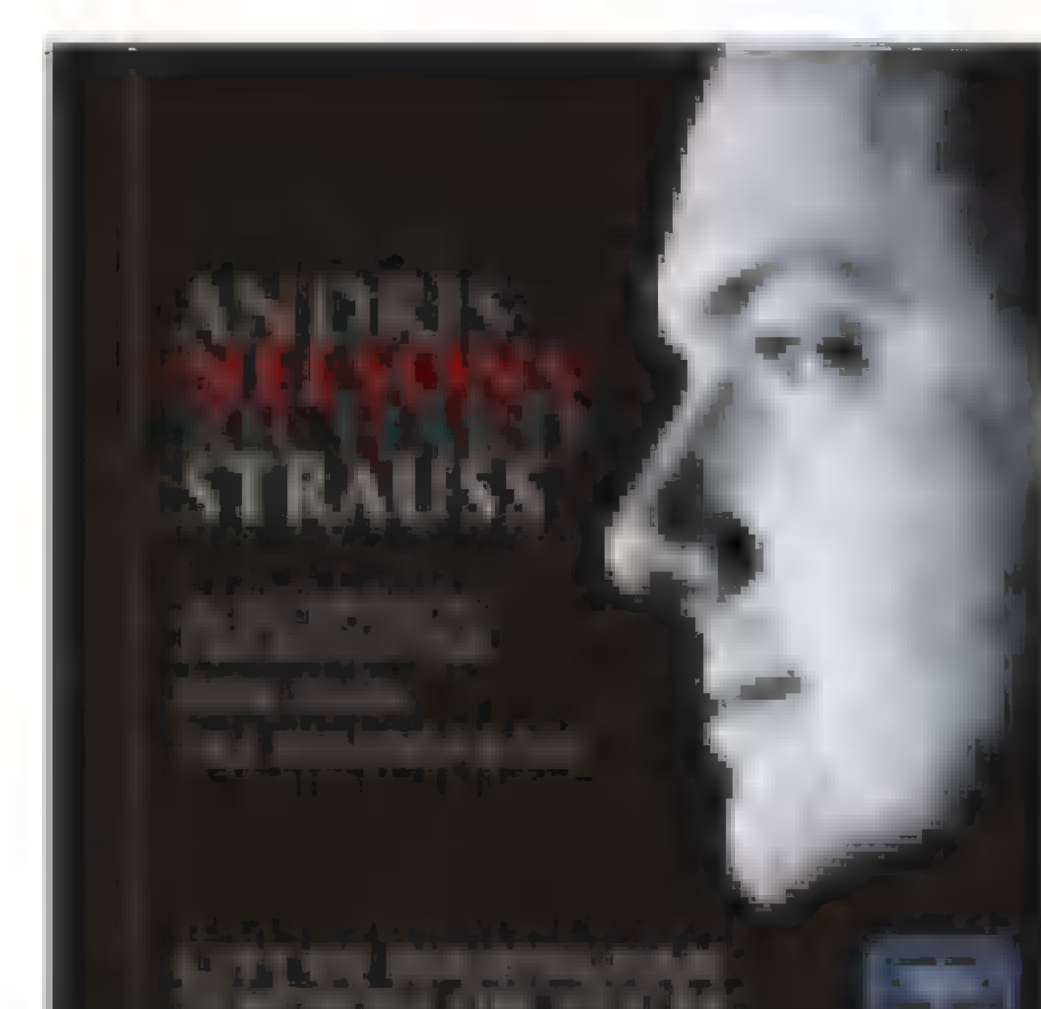
► **REVIEW ON PAGE 39**



**MUSSORGSKY.
RAVEL** Orchestral Works
**Anima Eterna /
Jos van Immerseel**
Zig-Zag Territoires
© ZYT343

Immerseel's commitment to informed exploration reaps rewards once more – the performance's expression and colour together create a beguiling sound world.

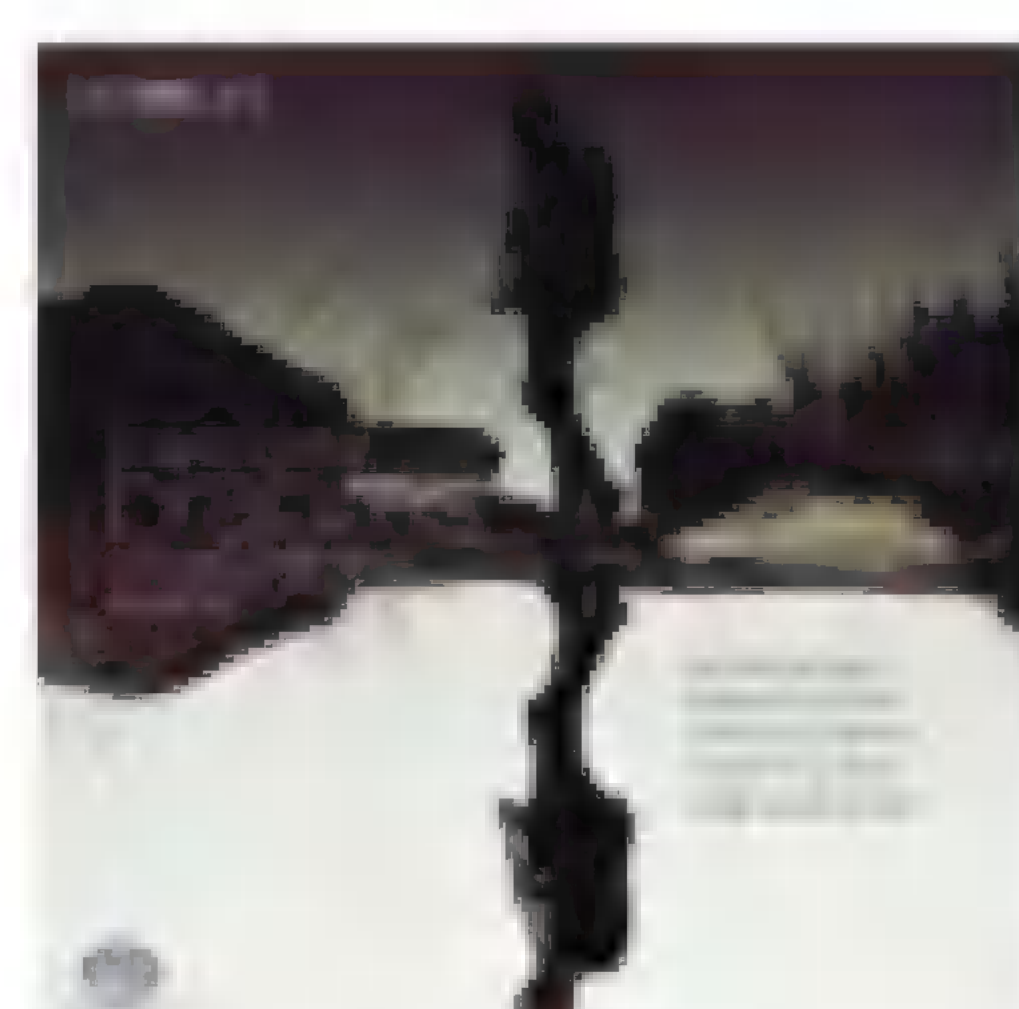
► **REVIEW ON PAGE 39**



R STRAUSS
Tone-Poems
**City of Birmingham
Symphony Orchestra** /
Andris Nelsons
Orfeo © C878 141A

A brilliant addition to the Strauss anniversary-year releases and an important record of the orchestra's fruitful relationship with their Latvian director.

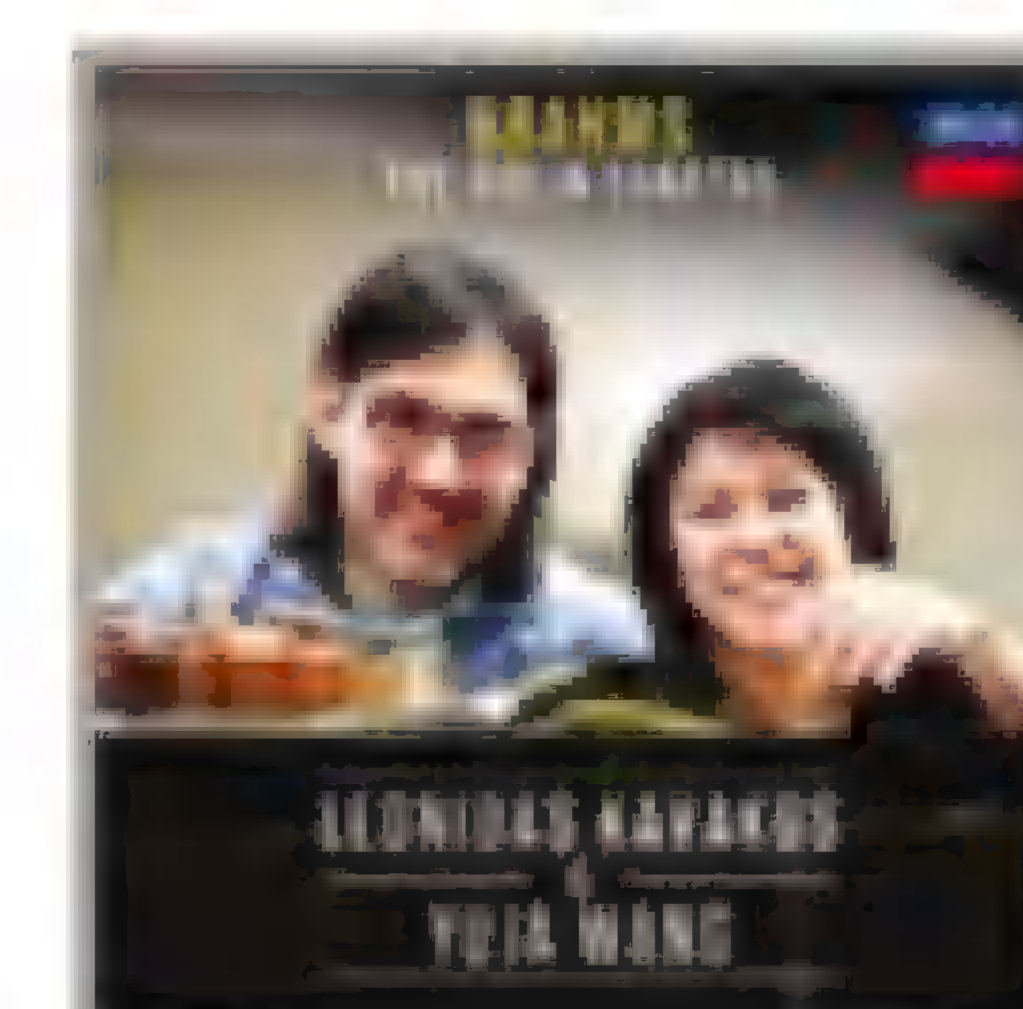
► **REVIEW ON PAGE 42**



BRAHMS
Chamber Works
Martin Fröst *cl* et al
BIS © BIS2063
Superb soloists
working together

as a hugely impressive ensemble make this a very fine Brahms Quintet indeed (the disc also includes a reissue of Fröst's recording of the Clarinet Trio).

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 50**



BRAHMS
Violin Sonatas
Leonidas Kavakos *vn*
Yuja Wang *pf*
Decca © 478 6442DH
A strikingly

vibrant and expressive partnership. The collaborative spirit shown by Kavakos and Wang has you gripped from the word go.

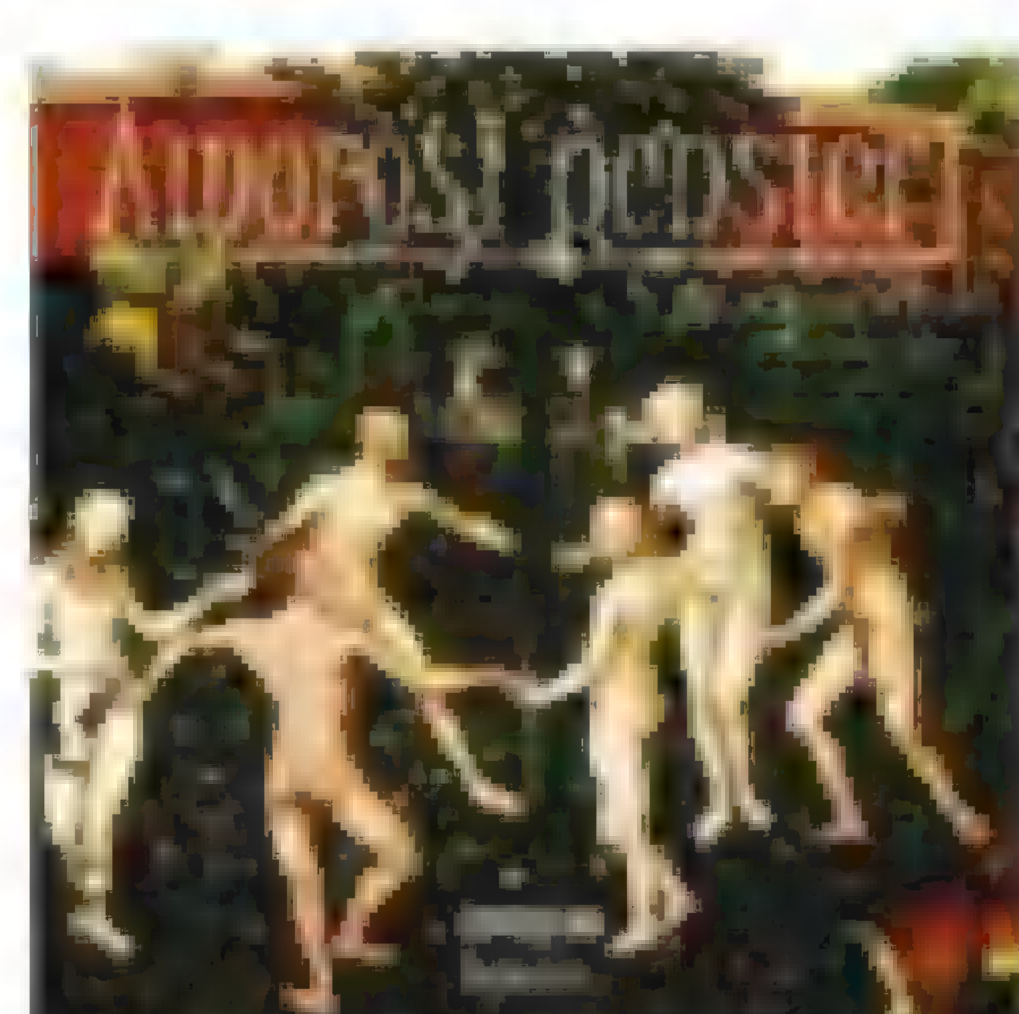
► **REVIEW ON PAGE 53**



JS BACH
Solo Cello Suites (arr
for viola) - Nos 2, 3 & 6
Maxim Rysanov *va*
BIS © BIS2033
Bach, Rysanov

and the viola – it's like hearing these remarkable but familiar works afresh, and a fascinating and musically beautiful experience.

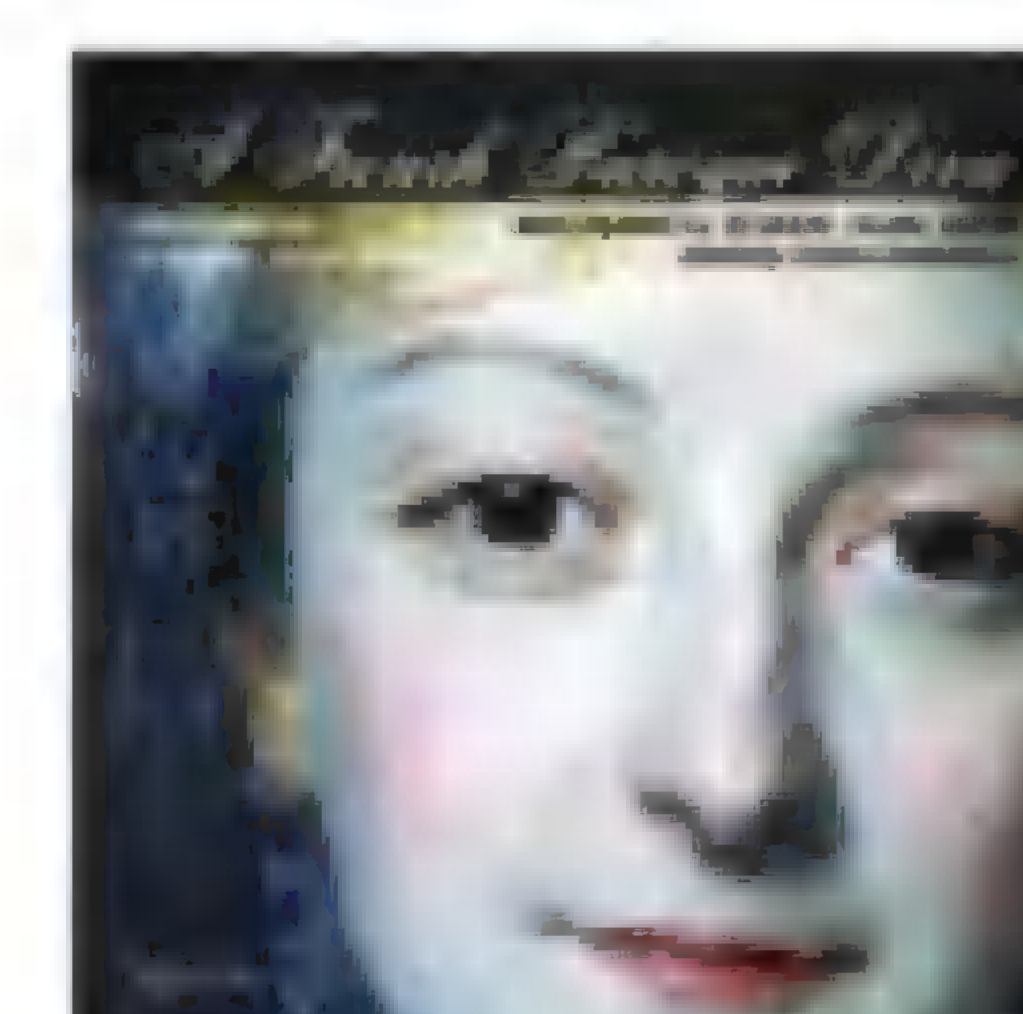
► **REVIEW ON PAGE 64**



'AMOROSI PENSIERI'
Songs for the
Habsburg Court
Cinquecento
Hyperion © CDA6803
Excellent ensemble

singing, and distinctive voices exploring every angle of these unfamiliar but instantly engaging secular songs from the Renaissance.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 79**



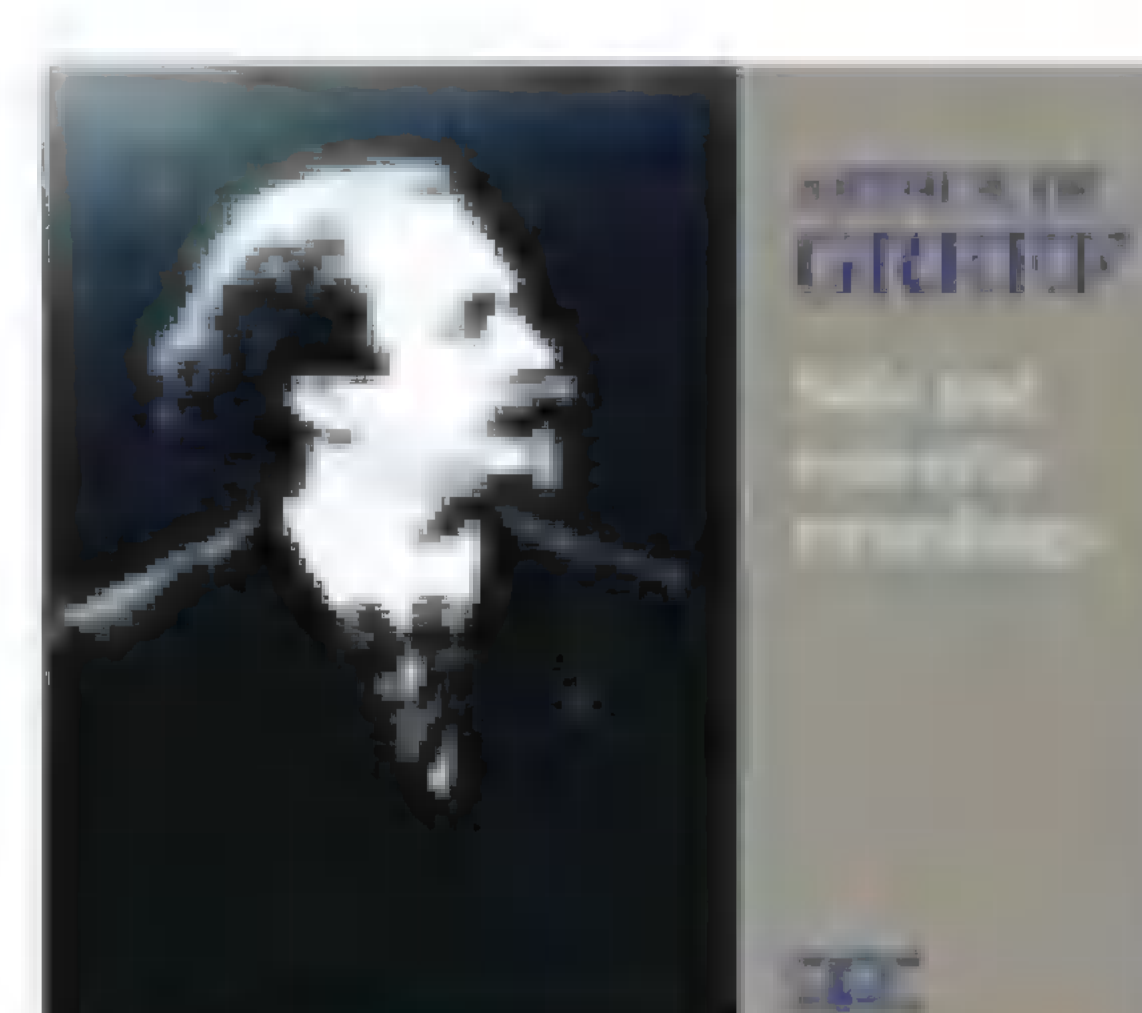
**'A FRENCH
BAROQUE DIVA'**
Arias for Marie Fel
Carolyn Sampson *sop*
Ex Cathedra /
Jeffrey Skidmore

Hyperion © CDA68035
A delightful portrait of an 18th-century artist: exquisite singing throughout from one of today's most characterful sopranos.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 82**



DVD/BLU-RAY
ROSSINI *Otello*
Sols incl **Cecilia Bartoli** and **John Osborn**;
Orchestra La Scintilla / **Muhai Tang**
Decca © DVD 074 3863DH; © 074 3865DH
Bartoli's powerful performance shines among an altogether impressive cast in Rossini's take on the Shakespeare story.
► **REVIEW ON PAGE 91**



A lesser-known pianist from the early era of recording given a justified profile in this four-disc box. ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 45**

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FOR THE RECORD



Jubilant: Pianist Martin James Bartlett receives his BBC Young Musician trophy from Clemency Burton-Hill

Pianist Martin James Bartlett wins BBC Young Musician of the Year 2014

Martin James Bartlett, a 17-year-old pianist from Essex, has been crowned BBC Young Musician 2014. In a thrilling finale at Edinburgh's Usher Hall, Bartlett performed Rachmaninov's *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini*, accompanied by the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra under Kirill Karabits. The panel of judges also enjoyed impressive performances from percussionist Elliott Gaston-Ross and recorder player Sophie Westbrooke, both 15, before composer James MacMillan announced the winner.

The biennial competition, founded in 1978, has produced such winners as Freddy Kempf, Natalie Clein, Guy Johnston and Nicola Benedetti, who this year began her role as Ambassador, commemorating a decade since her own win. Benedetti was in attendance at Usher Hall, as were presenters Alison Balsom –

herself a finalist in 1998 – and Miloš Karadaglić, both of whom oversaw the televised category finals on BBC Four.

Bartlett, who has studied at the Royal College of Music Junior Department since the age of eight, looked overwhelmed as he accepted his trophy – and a hug – from Clemency Burton-Hill. Now a student at the Purcell School, he also studies bassoon and recorder and has been awarded full scholarships to three London conservatoires. He will continue his piano studies at the Royal College, where he has been awarded a Foundation Scholarship.

The winner of the 2012 competition, cellist Laura van der Heijden, is now enjoying a busy solo career, with forthcoming highlights including a performance of Elgar's Cello Concerto with the RPO under Michael Seal in November.

The RPS Awards honour live music-making

The Royal Philharmonic Society Awards, partnered by BBC Radio 3, were presented at London's Dorchester Hotel in May.

Thirteen categories were recognised from over 400 nominations selected by 65 jurors, and honoured achievement in live performance and events. In the words of RPS Chairman John Gilhooly: 'The RPS Music Awards...are not commercially driven and cut through hype to put the focus on the music itself.'

Among the winners were: Daniel Barenboim (Conductor Award), mezzo

Vienna State Opera launches high-definition streaming service

During the 2014-15 season, 45 Vienna State Opera performances will be broadcast live in HD quality to global audiences via an app, accessible on your PC/Mac, tablet or phone. A partnership with Samsung has resulted in the Staatsoper being equipped with nine HD cameras, which will offer two streams that viewers can switch between: a single, fixed shot of the stage and an edited, 'produced' stream employing different angles. The streams will be viewable in a 72-hour window after the performances to allow for audiences in different countries to watch at a time that is convenient for them.

Andersson appointed BBC Now's new Composer-in-Association

B Tommy Andersson will spend a season as Composer-in-Association with the BBC National Orchestra of Wales from September 2014. The composer will work closely with the orchestra's Danish Principal Conductor Thomas Søndergård, writing two works for performance at St David's Hall and becoming the subject of a Composer Portrait weekend at BBC Hoddinott Hall.

Tenor Bryan Hymel signs contract with Warner Classics

American tenor Bryan Hymel, who made his Metropolitan Opera debut in 2012 (as Aeneas in Berlioz's *Les Troyens*), has signed an exclusive recording contract with Warner Classics. Alain Lanceron, President of

PHOTOGRAPHY: ALAN PEEBLES/BBC

and former *Gramophone* Artist of the Year Joyce DiDonato (Singer Award), and violinist Patricia Kopatchinskaja (Instrumentalist Award), who had won the *Gramophone* Recording of the Year 2013 for her disc of Bartók, Ligeti and Eötvös on the Naïve label.

Other winners included pianist Igor Levit (Young Artist Award), George Benjamin (Large-Scale Composition), Sir Harrison Birtwistle (Chamber-Scale Composition), Glyndebourne's *Imago* (Learning and Participation Award) and Southbank Centre's 'The Rest is Noise' festival (Concerts Series and Festivals Award).

The RPS Gold Medal went to the bass Sir John Tomlinson.



New Warner Classics signing: tenor Bryan Hymel

Warner Classics, said: 'Hymel has rapidly established himself as a leading light among the new generation of tenors.' Hymel said: 'I am looking forward to the opportunity to record the repertoire that has brought me to leading theatres around the world.'

Pianist James Rhodes launches new label – Instrumental Records

James Rhodes has launched a new record label in association with Signum Classics called Instrumental Records. The first album, 'Five', sees Rhodes playing Bach's Partita, BWV825, and Beethoven's Piano Sonata No 15. Rhodes said: 'I want to tour as a label and hopefully engage a new kind of musician and listener.'

Lars Vogt named Music Director of Royal Northern Sinfonia

Lars Vogt will assume his first professional conducting position with the Royal Northern Sinfonia, replacing Thomas Zehetmair who has been at the helm of the orchestra for 12 years. Zehetmair will become the Sinfonia's Conductor Laureate.

Daniel Barenboim launches new download-only label with Universal

Daniel Barenboim and Universal have launched a new download-only label dedicated to Barenboim's art as conductor, piano soloist, chamber musician and accompanist. The label is called Peral, Spanish for pear tree ('Barenboim' is Yiddish for 'Birnbaum', the German for pear tree). The label's logo has been designed by the architect Frank Gehry, a friend of Barenboim who is building a new concert hall and rehearsal building for Barenboim's West-Eastern Divan Orchestra in Berlin.

The first release comprises live performances of Bruckner's first three symphonies recorded with the Staatskapelle Berlin, the orchestra of the Staatsoper, where Barenboim is Music Director. This is the start of Barenboim's third cycle of the Bruckner symphonies (the previous two were with the Chicago Symphony for DG and the Berlin Philharmonic for Teldec). Barenboim believes the orchestra, with its absorption in operatic music, brings to the music a singing line which he has been seeking.

Commenting on the new initiative, Barenboim said: 'For the first time in civilisation you can be a highly intelligent and highly cultured person and have no contact whatsoever with music. You can know a lot about literature, philosophy, painting, architecture, and music plays no role in it. This is one of the philosophical reasons why there is such difficulty with the recorded music scene. I didn't want to accept such a negative verdict and therefore I wanted to find a way to start something that might get through to the younger generation who are completely at home in the digital world.'



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'We Are Making a New World', 1918, by Paul Nash, whose blissful, halcyon view of landscape was torn apart by the First World War and replaced with a bitter, dystopian vision

IMPRESSIONS OF WAR

It's easy enough to see how music written during and in the aftermath of the First World War may have been shaped by the horrors witnessed, but when it comes to exploring pieces written in the lead-up to hostilities, we must, warns Philip Clark, resist imbuing them with a coating of after-the-event sentiment.

PHOTOGRAPHY: IMPERIAL WAR MUSEUM/IWM_ART_001146



Foreground: Ravel in 1913 – later he was to deny that he had responded to the war in his music. Background: a photograph of an Eastern Front battlefield in 1916

Buoyed by the unlikely success of *Pierrot lunaire*, Arnold Schoenberg was at home in Vienna working on a new 12-note symphony when Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria was assassinated while on an official visit to Sarajevo in June 1914. And just as it was the end of the road for the unfortunate archduke, the progress of Schoenberg's symphony was also stopped dead in its tracks. The archduke's murder would catapult Europe towards conflict and Schoenberg found himself sucked inside the ensuing breakdown of order, unable to finish anything to his satisfaction until long after the Great War had ended.

That opening paragraph, which probably leaves you feeling slightly queasy, was designed with your discomfort in mind. The callous juxtaposition of a composer's abandoned symphony against the personal tragedy of a murder – albeit of a public figure carrying out official duties during an era when political assassinations were far from rare – does indeed sit uneasily. But how better to underline the idea that the certain world in which composers, and other artists, had hitherto existed

'The war turned Ravel into a composer whose music held inscrutable secrets'

was about to crumble? Marrying the inner world of their intellectual lives – a world over which they had complete control – with relentless and stark reports of extreme tragedy presented them

with a disorientating and uncomfortable new reality.

Or perhaps not. The first time we encounter Schoenberg in *1913: The Year before the Storm*, by German writer and historian Florian Illies, the composer is having palpitations about the forthcoming premiere of his blockbuster cantata *Gurrelieder* as Thomas Mann, reeling from the critical monstrosity his first play received in the Vienna press, is concerned that the new rug he purchased in all good faith to insulate his study might be of substandard quality. Alma Mahler, widow of Gustav, is having an affair with the painter Oskar Kokoschka, as fellow painter Gustav Klimt is trying to cross various erotic lines with his nude models. Meanwhile, James Joyce is teaching English to the Italian writer Italo Svevo, who in turn would become the model for *Ulysses's* Leopold Bloom. The underlying message of Illies's book: Europe's intellectual elite were pursuing their carefree lifestyles



as though it were business as usual, apparently indifferent to the mounting political unrest.

But who wouldn't be marked by below-par carpeting or find Alma Mahler attractive? Illies's thesis, his narrative about the sickly calm before the breakdown, is fatally undermined because blurring boundaries between artists' everyday momentary obsessions and the totality of their world view looks suspiciously like a deliberate attempt at setting them up to fail. Two other recent books – Australian-born historian Charles Emmerson's *1913: The World before the Great War* and Florence Nightingale biographer Mark Bostridge's *The Fateful Year: England 1914* – paint broader pictures of a world in extreme flux. London is developing into a financial centre. Berlin is a nascent metropolis. The suffragette movement is working to right an inexplicable wrong. Industrial unrest is endemic. And to take the emotional and technical temperature of Schoenberg's pre-war *Pierrot lunaire* as something distinct from the music he would write after the war; to appreciate how Vaughan Williams's post-war *Flos campi* necessarily viewed the world differently from *The Lark Ascending* (1914); or to comprehend how the opulence of Ravel's 1912 *Daphnis et Chloé* differs from the fury of *La valse* – all this requires us to think ourselves back into the mindset of 1913.

This is no simple task. By the end of the war, a paradigm shift had taken place within the collective psyche. Every subsequent generation would live in a heightened state of unease which has now, almost a hundred years on (two world wars later and with visions of September 11 rewinding through our imaginations), become ingrained within the way we think. But in 1913 no such universal fears existed. Can external events transform hopeful C sharps into tragic D flats? Do we really expect composers to write pieces that are also prophetic visions? Or could the truth be that we project retrospective emotions over the music written during periods of crisis? Had there been no war, might the music of Schoenberg, Vaughan Williams, Ravel et al have anyway renewed its stylistic and technical basis?

Foreground: Schoenberg in 1916.
Background: battlefield in France, 1916

'We will throw these mediocre kitschmongers into slavery, and teach them to venerate the German spirit' – Schoenberg

As composers, Schoenberg and Vaughan Williams had precisely nothing in common, but their experiences during the war shared a certain fearful symmetry. Illies has fun at the expense of Schoenberg's triskaidekaphobia, his deeply ingrained phobia of the number 13. To short-circuit the unimaginable horror of 'Moses und Aaron' – an opera title consisting of 13 letters – many years later, he might have taken the liberty of transforming the biblical 'Aaron' into the decidedly Schoenbergian 'Aron'; but here he is, in 1913, about to face an unthinkable calamity, waking up in cold sweats about his 100-minute cantata –

worrying about whether it could ever realistically get off the ground, and about what his supporters, who only a year earlier were cheering his freely atonal *Pierrot lunaire*, might think of his apparent return to bulbous, muscular Wagnerian tonality.

The truth is, though, that the war years crippled Schoenberg emotionally and creatively. Although he was initially deemed unfit for military service, like Vaughan Williams he did serve time in the military, where he found his reputation preceded him. 'Are you that notorious Schoenberg the composer?'

his officer asked. 'Someone had to be, so it might as well have been me,' came the retort. His chronic asthma ensured an early discharge after a year in which Schoenberg and the army realised how incompatible they were. But with Webern and Berg both serving in the war, and with food and fuel supplies at a premium in Vienna, the imperative to compose drained away. And then, in 1917, a double trauma: Schoenberg's finances became so strained that his family were evicted from their home; then he was recalled to active military service.

Vaughan Williams enlisted in the army on New Year's Eve 1914, opting to join the field ambulance corps, where his duties were unspeakably grim. Evacuating wounded soldiers from the field meant working around the bodies of those who had not been so fortunate. After the war, Vaughan Williams would become a professor of composition at the Royal College of Music in London, but the scars endured: the emotional temperament of his music changed instantly, and his close

proximity to persistent gunfire left him with a legacy of hearing problems.

Flos campi, Vaughan Williams's suite for viola solo, small choir and chamber orchestra (first performed by Lionel Tertis and the Queen's Hall Orchestra under Henry Wood in October 1925) can't – and how could it? – bring itself to recapture the picturesque purity of *The Lark Ascending*. The caliginous, unlit textures Vaughan Williams exhibits during the opening of his piece – the tenebrous viola pressed against sour double reeds, textures that unmistakably anticipate Harrison Birtwistle's dark pastoralism – could hardly be further removed from the happy-go-lucky, airborne buoyancy of the earlier work.

Vaughan Williams's wordless chorus shimmers and undoubtedly charms, especially in the folksy second movement; but however beguiling its sound, a chorus that sings without articulating words has a curious psychological side effect. Voices convey verbal meaning; but voices that speak without verbal utterance have had part of their humanity blotted out, like the alienated sensation caused by talking to someone who insists on hiding their eyes behind sunglasses. Eyes and words are the windows to our souls. *Flos campi* – translated literally as 'Flowers of the Fields' – puts you in mind of Paul Nash, the painter whose blissful, halcyon view of landscape was torn apart by the war. In his 1918 painting *We Are Making a New World*, once opulent, fertile fields are scarred by the deep imprint of trenches as trees stripped of their foliage hang lifeless like ghosts of dismembered body parts.

In the final months of the war, Schoenberg moved out of central Vienna to the nearby town of Mödling, where he hoped a new teaching post in a school would help to stabilise his perilous financial position. And with the war now over, rather than pick up the pieces of his compositional career, he chose to bide his time and think. He established the Verein für musikalische Privataufführungen (Society for Private Musical Performances), which aimed to bring a broad cross-section of new music, often in chamber arrangements, to a subscription audience devoted to the ideals of modern composition. Schoenberg was striving to make a new world.

But what of his own music? In 1915, Schoenberg attempted to pick over the sketches of that same large 12-note symphony he had begun before the war, devising a text based around the biblical story of Jacob's ladder to set as a choral finale. *Die Jakobsleiter* would subsequently emerge as a stand-alone oratorio, but one that would never be completed – he worked on it intensively during 1926 and was still tinkering with the orchestration during the Second World War when other compositional projects intervened. During his time in the army he attempted to begin a Rilke setting (to be accompanied by violin, viola, cello and harmonium), a string septet and a new piano piece. But his next major work, the Op 24 Serenade for male voice and small ensemble, would not appear until 1923.

Die Jakobsleiter was destined never to be finished. With his life disintegrating around him, Schoenberg was attempting to renew the whole basis of his compositional language by inching towards the systemisation of the free atonal language typified by *Pierrot lunaire* into the compositional technique that would eventually be termed 'serialism' – but external pressures derailed the thought processes. Serenade was Schoenberg's first fully fledged serial work and chose not to dwell on the recent past; it was in fact positively easy-going and breezy, certainly compared with the Schoenberg of the pre-war expressionist *Erwartung* and *Die glückliche Hand*. The light-on-its-feet mandolin- and guitar-led texture supported a form that unapologetically referenced Classical masters, and when Janáček heard the piece

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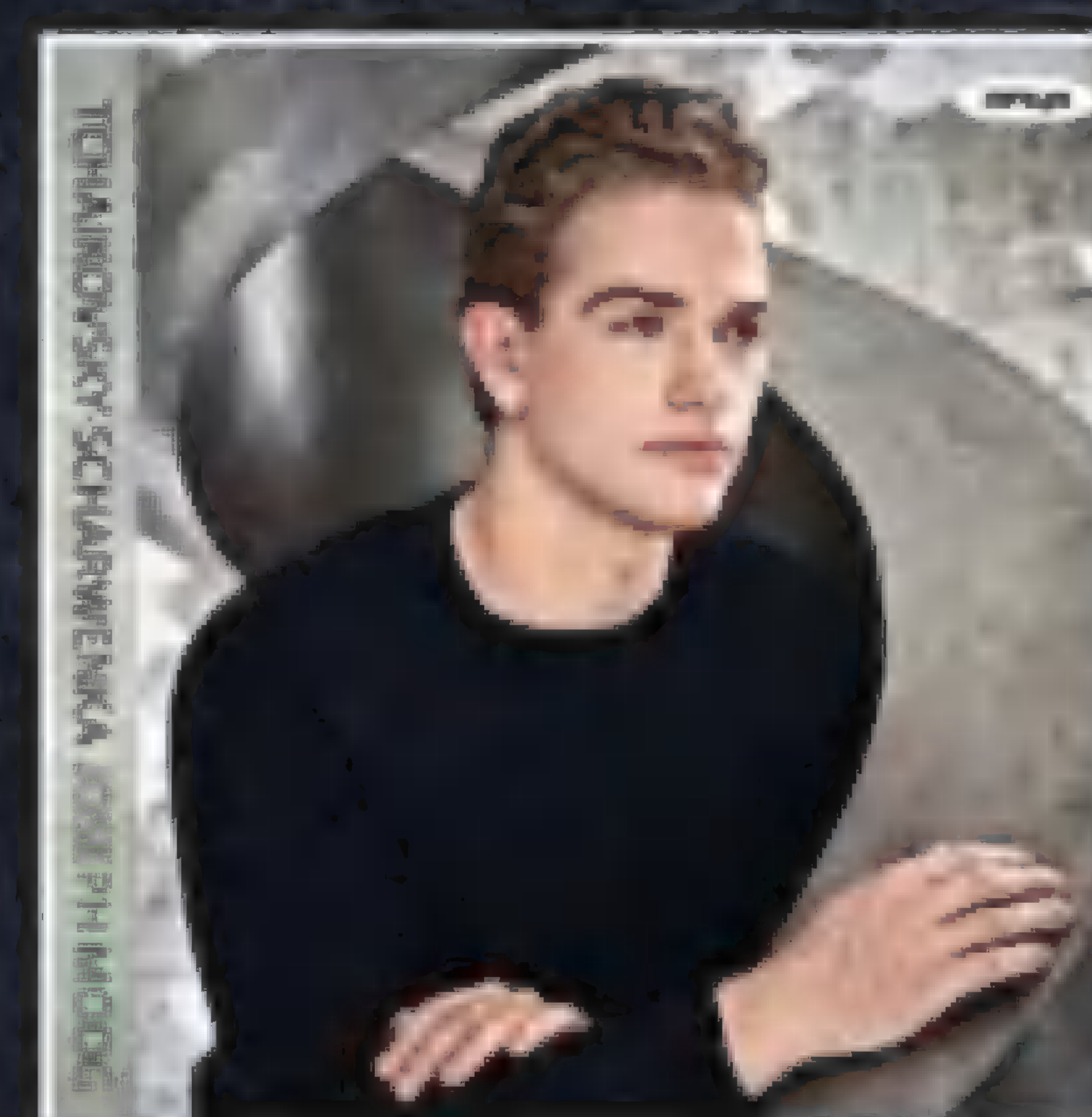


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in 1925 he described it as 'Viennese strumming'. The taut serial construction of the central song, 'Petrarch Sonnet', is offset by the simple Ländler of the 'Dance Scene' section. Recapitulated material reappears in distorted (dis)guises, as though Schoenberg were testing his innovations against tradition.

Serenade was no allegory in the manner of *Flos campi*; it feels as if it were written by a composer who, liberated from the agonies of the previous few years, was now running with ideas he had been hitherto forced to repress. Schoenberg's relationship with Classical form was questioning, critical and unsettled, and he was waging a personal war against what he termed the bourgeois tendencies of musical reactionaries such as Stravinsky, Ravel and, bizarrely, Bizet, all of whom he complained about in a letter to Alma Mahler: 'Now comes the reckoning!' he thundered. 'Now we will throw these mediocre kitschmongers into slavery, and teach them to venerate the German spirit and to worship the German God.'

Paradoxically, Ravel's *La valse* (1920) is usually considered a complaint against exactly the sort of bourgeois tendencies that so pained Schoenberg. During the war, Ravel was rejected from the French army and air force because of his fragile health and he worked as a military truck driver delivering fuel to the front. But whereas the war largely shut Schoenberg and Vaughan Williams down artistically, during time off from his duties Ravel composed his solo piano masterwork *Le tombeau de Couperin*, each movement paying tribute to fallen friends killed during hostilities.

But what seems palpably clear from the surface, and indeed the depth, of Ravel's music about his response to the war met



Vaughan Williams in 1915: post-war, the nature of his music changed instantly

with blank denials from the composer himself. The message of *La valse* seems obvious enough: Ravel borrows the archetypal Viennese dance form, from which he builds a new waltz that reflects on the authentic thing itself – which is then made to implode from the inside. But Ravel, in a 1922 letter to the composer Maurice Emmanuel, flatly denied the connection between his piece and the war: 'One should only see in it what the music expresses – a progression of sonority, to which the stage comes along to add light and movement.'

But just because Ravel claimed that doesn't mean it's true – as we know, composers are famously unreliable witnesses to their own music; and that the archetype of a waltz didn't have any extramusical meaning seems, frankly, implausible. Ravel complained about his piece being mistaken for a parody – but what else is his G major Piano Concerto if not a parody of jazz? The metaphor behind Ravel's *Concerto for the Left Hand*, commissioned by Paul Wittgenstein, the Austrian pianist whose right arm had been shot during the war, is explicit; and you wonder if the extreme language of *Boléro* was Ravel's retort to the reception of *La valse*. The side-drum rhythm that underpins *Boléro* might be Spanish in origin, but it's grinding and quasi-militaristic nevertheless. But, to avoid confusion, Ravel simply took traditional musical rhetoric out of *Boléro*. It's a piece about the 'body' orchestra that has no reference beyond the internal workings-out of its own material. The war turned Ravel into a composer whose music held inscrutable secrets. What to make of those embedded references to jazz and ragtime in his Violin Sonata? And why would a composer write a piece, like *Boléro*, that's all orchestration and no music? His music became more difficult to read.

Tavener premiere marks WWI centenary at the Proms

The music of Sir John Tavener is the focus of a special Late Night Prom on August 4 to commemorate the anniversary of Britain's declaration of the First World War 100 years ago. The Tallis Scholars will perform two works (one a BBC commission world premiere) without an interval, providing a musically poignant atmosphere to this evening of reflection.

The relationship between The Tallis Scholars and Tavener began 36 years ago, when Tavener was a composer with several hits behind him, but was now searching for a new path. In Renaissance polyphony, and in particular in the music of the Tudor John Taverner, he thought he would find an answer.

Tavener was, recalls the group's founder and director Peter Phillips 'very obviously looking for a new way...and he thought our sound and his namesake might be it – he never fully gave up on that'. The composer had yet to



'Searching for a new path': composer John Tavener with Peter Phillips on the Greek island of Aegina in 1981

embrace the Orthodox faith that was to inform so much of his subsequent work. 'I was with him many times in Orthodox services,' recalls Phillips, 'and it was the atmosphere of it all that really got to him. The atmosphere of the old Taverner also affected him, and he would then recreate that atmosphere in his own language.'

That first period of collaboration led to *Ikon of Light*, produced while holidaying together on the Greek island of Aegina over the New Year of 1980-81. At this year's Proms, The Tallis Scholars will perform that piece alongside a new – and final – work by the composer.

At what was to be their last meeting, Tavener had asked Phillips to bring along the score of Josquin's 24-voice canon *Qui habitat*, which the pair then explored in detail. The result of this meeting was *Requiem Fragments*, with the word 'fragments' an indication of how the work draws on elements of the Requiem – the *Requiem aeternam*, *Kyrie eleison* and *Sanctus* – overlaid with references to Hindu philosophy. The influence of the Josquin work lies in the use of a triple-choir canon, while there are also strong links in form between the new work and that written for the ensemble three decades ago. **MC**

EXPERIENCE Hear Tavener at Prom 25

But all these composers – Schoenberg, Ravel, Vaughan Williams (and also Elgar, Strauss and Stravinsky) – were the lucky ones who emerged from the war relatively unscathed. The list of British composers – including George Butterworth, Cecil Coles, Ernest Farrar, Frederick Kelly – who didn't survive remains shocking. Of those who did survive, Ivor Gurney suffered declining mental health, while EJ Moeran and Arthur Bliss would remain forever marked by their experiences. 'Although the war had been over for more than 10 years, I was still troubled by frequent nightmares,' Bliss wrote. 'I was still there in the trenches with a few men; we knew the armistice had been signed, but we had been forgotten; so had a section of the Germans opposite. It was as though we were both doomed to fight on till extinction. I used to wake with horror.'

As I write, Butterworth's 1913 orchestral piece *The Banks of Green Willow* is playing in the background and the emotional connotations of the work are clear: this composer is evoking exactly the sort of landscape in which, three years later during the Battle of the Somme, he would be killed. The understated innocence of the music is heartbreaking – Butterworth even describes his piece as an 'idyll'. But imbuing it with a coating of after-the-event sentiment is, I think, misrepresenting this music and its place in time.

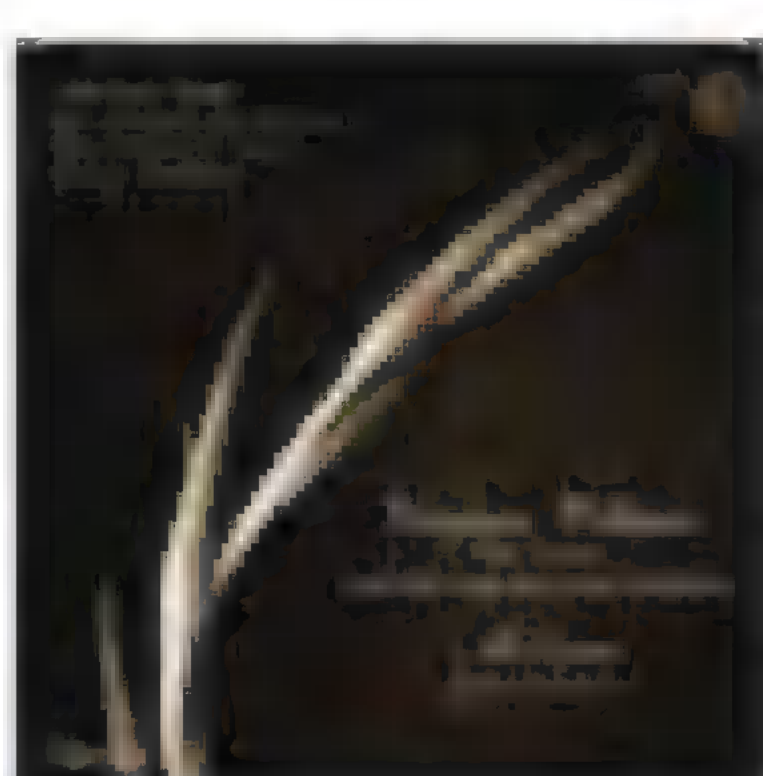
Moeran's Symphony in G minor provides us with an enigma familiar from Ravel. Moeran opted to say nothing explicit about the war during his lifetime, and wrote about his Symphony only in abstract musical terms. He painstakingly worked on the piece over the course of 10 years, finally completing it in 1937, and the sense of unease about a disrupted peace is profound. What to make of the nervy, jittery harmonies that open the symphony? Or the second movement, where the woodwind feel suffocated and the brass outline contours reminiscent of the *Dies irae*? A vision of the apocalypse? Or purely musical obsessions being worked through compositionally? Perhaps Moeran's Symphony, distanced from the events themselves, manages to do both – the inner intellectual world of this composer grasping for an abstract response to very real tragedy. **G**

EXPERIENCE World War I is commemorated in Proms 4, 16, 20, 22, 29, 38, 42, 47 and 56



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Schoenberg:
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John Shirley-Quirk
bass-bar Ensemble
Intercontemporain /

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Boulez's classic, pokerface 1979 recording is playful and beguiling.



Butterworth:
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Green Willow
LSO /
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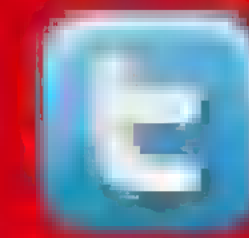

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International flavour: the Borusan Istanbul Philharmonic Orchestra with Principal Conductor Sascha Goetzel perform at the Proms on July 29

WORLD MUSIC

With 10 international orchestras making their debuts at the Proms this year, Geoffrey Norris wonders what it is that gives an orchestra its national identity

Distinctive sound. How often do we see these two words applied to orchestras? Read any orchestra's self-assessment and, likely as not, it will pride itself on the distinctiveness of its sound. Read concert or CD reviews of the great orchestras and in all probability there will be a comment about its distinctive sound. When *Gramophone* published its list of the top 10 international orchestras in 2008, all of them – from the Royal Concertgebouw at No 1 down to the Dresden Staatskapelle at No 10 – could be said to have a sound that is distinctive.

The appearance of no fewer than 22 foreign orchestral ensembles at the Proms this year, of which almost half are making their Proms debut, prompts a broader question: alongside any individual characteristics that an orchestra might possess, is there such a thing as a national identity to the way in which an orchestra plays? Can we recognise the Royal Concertgebouw as being quintessentially Dutch, or the Dresden Staatskapelle as German? Will the Qatar Philharmonic, with its complement of largely non-Qatari players and its South Korean conductor Han-Na Chang, strike us on September 7 as offering a typically Qatari slant on Tchaikovsky's Fifth Symphony, Rachmaninov's Second Piano Concerto and the Iranian composer Behzad Ranjbaran's *Seemorgh*? Will the Borusan Istanbul Philharmonic Orchestra under its Austrian conductor Sascha Goetzel bring a particularly Turkish flavour to its concert on July 29? Since the programme contains the overture to Mozart's *Die Entführung aus*


dem Serail, that might well be the case, but in Balakirev, Holst, Handel, Respighi and Gabriel Prokofiev – who knows?

Describing orchestras according to their national provenance has often resulted in lazy cliché: discipline (German), reedy (French), quick-learning (British), sleek (American), full-bodied (Russian). Interestingly, Russia is one of the major countries that has no orchestra playing at this year's Proms, but it is in Russia where the most striking changes have occurred in orchestral playing over the past half a century. Anybody who treasures discs by Moscow or Leningrad orchestras from the height of the Soviet era will know that one of the instantly identifiable features is the exuberance of the brass sections. Give the trumpet a solo and he (it was always a he) will be puffing out his cheeks until they are fit to burst and going full pelt with a vibrato as wide as the Russian steppe itself. Nowadays that is not the case. The practice is regarded as old-fashioned. In the Russian orchestras that have a long history, as in the ones that have sprung up in the post-Communist age, the brass sections are now, if not exactly mellow, then certainly less obtrusive in that way which foreign listeners often regarded as comical.

We tend to admire Russian orchestras – or at least the best of them – for the richness of sound that emanates from the lower strings and rises up through the general texture. But wait. Do we not also admire the way in which Vasily Petrenko has instilled a 'Russian' sound into the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra for its Naxos series of Shostakovich symphonies? This is perhaps a much more intriguing

development in the orchestral landscape of today than searching for national identity or contending that German orchestras have a special claim on German music, French on French, British on British, and so on. Programmes in concert halls throughout the world would look very bleak if that were so, and we know it not to be true. Yes, we can hear the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra or the Royal Concertgebouw, to name only two, and we can know that they are who they are from the special attributes of the way in which they play and the particular timbre that they produce, a timbre that has in many cases been honed over considerable time and nurtured by the acoustics of the auditoria that the orchestras have as their homes. Tradition is a laudable, valued commodity, and it is a tribute to the dignity in which it is held that, for all the globalisation, swiftness of communication and ease of international travel that can mean an orchestra can choose players from more or less wherever it likes, individuality is maintained and cherished.

But, equally, the great orchestras – and even the not so great ones – have shown themselves to be malleable rather than doggedly representative of a 'national' style. And this surely is a positive factor. If the music being played dictates a particular interpretative stance and elicits a compelling performance, does the orchestra's geographical origin matter? **G**

EXPERIENCE  The 10 international orchestras make their Proms debuts in Proms 2, 16, 44, 48, 55, 58, 61 and 67, and in Proms Saturday Matinees 1 and 2





Master Marriner

The founder of the Academy of St Martin in the Fields is returning to the Proms at the grand old age of 90. James Jolly meets the still-sprightly Sir Neville to discover the secret of his ensemble's unique sound as well as its stylistic approach to music-making

When Sir Neville Marriner, who turned 90 in April, takes to the podium at the BBC Proms on August 10, he will be the oldest conductor to appear in the festival's long history. (Some got close – Günter Wand was 89 at his last appearance in 2001, Leopold Stokowski bowed out at 84 and Pierre Monteux, scheduled to make his Proms debut at 89, sadly didn't quite make it.) And alongside this notable statistic – though conducting as a profession almost guarantees longevity – Marriner must be the only musician this season to have played in orchestras under both Arturo Toscanini and Wilhelm Furtwängler.

'I was playing in the London Symphony Orchestra at the time,' Marriner recalls, 'and [the EMI producer] Walter Legge – who was always very good to me – gave me a call and said would I like to come and "dep" in the Philharmonia for the Toscanini Brahms concerts. Of course everyone in the world wanted to play with him so I was very lucky to be asked. Naturally we were all petrified before the first rehearsal – he was a grand old man then [in 1952], about 85, and his sight wasn't wonderful, though his hearing was pretty good. But it didn't matter – as soon as he picked up the baton the adrenalin was flowing through the orchestra. You could measure it in buckets! It was extraordinary. When he appeared in the Festival Hall for the concert, Cantelli led him on, the audience stood and started to applaud and didn't stop. And we thought, "Oh, gosh. He's going to forget the National Anthem." Eventually the audience settled down, he turned around, pointed at the timpani and we were off. We then started one of the overtures, the *Tragic Overture*, I think, but he started the First Symphony. He'd forgotten the overture and if you hear the slightly chaotic recording of that piece – it was made live at the concert – you'll understand why! He quickly righted himself and it was fine.'

Marriner's memories of working with Furtwängler are less specific – they were for recording sessions, and he can't recall the repertoire – but he does remember being very impressed by the way Legge handled the situation. 'In those very early days we were recorded on wax for 78s and you had four minutes for a side. And Legge came out and said to Furtwängler, "Maestro, is it possible that we could take it a tiny bit quicker – we just couldn't get it on?" I remember thinking what a jolly brave man to ask Furtwängler to buck up!'

There can't be many music lovers who don't have at least one recording by Marriner and the Academy of St Martin in the Fields in their collection. Down the years they've made hundreds of discs for numerous different labels; the bulk was for Argo (later Decca), Philips and EMI but, being one of the 'must have' combinations for young artists to work with on debut concerto discs, they adorn many smaller independent labels. Marriner and I joke about how many times he's done the Bruch/Mendelssohn violin concerto coupling, though it was one of these that gave

the ASMF only its second Music Director, the violinist and now conductor Joshua Bell. Bell is just one of the artists with whom the ensemble has developed a particularly close relationship; others include the pianists Alfred Brendel and Murray Perahia. Marriner's first encounter with Brendel was during EMI sessions in 1967 when George Szell was recording Richard Strauss songs and Mozart concert arias with Elisabeth Schwarzkopf. 'That was the first time I noticed this young man at the piano – he was very discreet and Szell occasionally went over and talked to him, and it was Alfred Brendel. He'd just left Vienna and he had a certain reputation but nothing like it would become. We'd later have a very close – and very long – musical relationship. I remember when we did the Mozart piano concertos; I don't think he particularly wanted to learn the early ones – they don't get performed very much and just learning them to make the records took a lot of time. But he did have quite an effect on how the Academy plays Mozart now. Occasionally someone will say, "Oh God, you Brendelised that!" He became part of our musical

approach to Mozart; the way Alfred likes our up-beats to be, for example – it's much more positive than for most soloists.' (When Richard Osborne reviewed the complete set back in 1986 he concluded: 'No one who is fortunate enough to be able to afford to buy the Mozart piano concertos at one fell swoop should be deterred from investing in the Philips set which has already become for me a musical vade mecum of an altogether special importance and distinction.')

Perahia, who holds the title of Principal Guest Conductor, has a very different relationship with the orchestra, though he has rarely recorded with

Marriner conducting. 'With Murray they're in a world of their own because it becomes a sort of family affair. Alfred was a little bit outside the orchestra but Murray was very much in there – with the Academy things like that can happen. I'm full of admiration for the way Murray has handled this. I was a little bit disappointed that he asked me to conduct the Mozart piano concerto for my birthday concert – the orchestra enjoys it so much more if they play it as a chamber-music performance, but in the Festival Hall it's maybe not quite small enough to direct it from the keyboard.'

'But', I splutter, 'it's your *birthday* concert!' Marriner merely smiles – for a conductor, he's extraordinarily modest.

The story of the founding of the Academy of St Martin in the Fields has been told many times, and its growth into one of the most successful classical recording ensembles of all time is a remarkable achievement. When I talk to Sir Neville for this interview, we meet at his house in Kensington where those first experimental play-throughs and rehearsals had taken place. Was the group's genesis, I ask, a reaction against a prevailing stylistic approach (as was Nikolaus Harnoncourt's reason for creating his Concentus Musicus Wien) or was it a desire to explore new repertoire?

'It was a mixture. It all happened in this room here. We – about six of us, the original members of the Academy – were



'There can't be many music lovers who don't have at least one recording by Marriner in their collection'



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all at that time playing in the London Symphony Orchestra. We were quite new and we perhaps realised that this was not a lifetime calling because what we wanted to say about music was not really in our hands: we were told how to play things. And in those days, the way symphony orchestras approached Mozart, or even Beethoven, was very basic. You just played the notes – you didn't really rehearse because technically it wasn't so demanding. It all changed when Josef Krips came from Vienna to be the Principal Conductor [of the LSO]. He suddenly transformed the sound of the orchestra. And that was really potent for me because we suddenly realised what a personality like that can do with an orchestra if he has fully informed himself about what he wants. And so after rehearsals or concerts we'd come back here – by now there were about 12 of us – and for two years we just met when we could and played for pleasure. And because we were all string players we'd focus on the string pieces and the most obvious was Italian Baroque repertoire. We talked about the sort of sound we'd like to make and there was a great deal of discussion and disputing, and some very hard, fixed ideas had to be melted down. Stylistically a lot depended on what sort of violin player you were – Russian school, French school, Belgian school and so on.'

Soon the Academy had a personality and clearly loads of ambition. Chamber orchestras in the UK in the 1950s weren't a new phenomenon: the Boyd Neel Orchestra had been founded in 1932, the Goldsborough Orchestra – which would later become the English Chamber Orchestra – began life in 1948 (assuming its current name in 1960). And Marriner and his fellow players knew about them, and occasionally played with them too, but they felt that there was 'no feeling of a stylistic development. You adjusted in a typically English orchestral way to whoever was conducting; but we needed a uniform style that we all agreed about. And of course we [the ASMF] didn't have a conductor so it was very co-operative in those days. I think it wasn't until we started making gramophone records that there came a time limit on discussion. We couldn't talk our way through recording sessions! We had to play and so sooner or later someone had to make a decision and say, "OK, that's the way it's going to be". And I was lucky – it was me!'

Marriner is generous in acknowledging the role the recording industry has played in his and the Academy's career: hearing themselves on disc raised and maintained the quality of the ensemble, and the reputation that the Academy achieved on disc soon brought invitations to tour. A major stepping stone in the Academy's early history was being represented in Germany by the promoter Hans-Ulrik Schmid, who opened concert-hall doors throughout the country. 'He picked us up and then we started playing in places where there were already well-established ensembles like the Berlin Philharmonic and the Stuttgart Chamber Orchestra, so we knew we had to measure ourselves against them.'

Where record-making and touring once provided two very strong strands to the Academy's musical life, now it's the concert tours that bring in the income. 'Nowadays, because the record industry is much weaker, the orchestra depends almost entirely on touring – it doesn't have a really strong London profile because there isn't a concert hall suitable for an orchestra like us.'

But it's the Academy's recordings that have ensured Marriner's name is known the musical world over. 'The main thing about recording is that when you do a take the whole orchestra comes back and listens, and it cuts out so much talking. They can hear what needs doing – they can hear that the second flute isn't audible at that point, or that

the trombones need to keep it up there. You can hear how successful you are the second time round. That's so difficult to replicate in the concert hall – you know what it sounds like on stage but you've no idea what it sounds like to the audience. This is where we were enormously grateful to the industry because it made us maintain a particular standard. If you're on tour in Australia you go to a particular place, you've never been there before, it's got a hall that holds about 500 and the only reason the audience is there is because they've heard your records. You have to go on that stage and try and make the same sort of sound they were expecting.'

Amazingly for an orchestra making its official debut in 1959, the concert at this year's Proms will only be its 10th appearance at the festival (and at its first two concerts during the 1965 season the orchestra was only given a third of each programme – at the first there was a Handel concerto grosso before the BBC Symphony continued with Bernard Naylor's *Stabat mater* and, wait for it, Elgar's *The Dream of Gerontius*!). But Marriner feels that the Albert Hall is really too big for an ensemble that, at its core, is only 20 to 30 musicians strong; when the players appear this year for the Walton *Henry V* music they will be operating at symphony orchestra strength. I wonder if Sir Neville, as he prepares to walk on to the stage in that vast hall, will be thinking of Henry V's much-quoted line:

'Once more unto the breach, dear friends, once more'! **G**

EXPERIENCE Sir Neville Marriner conducts Beethoven, Bruch and Walton in Prom 32



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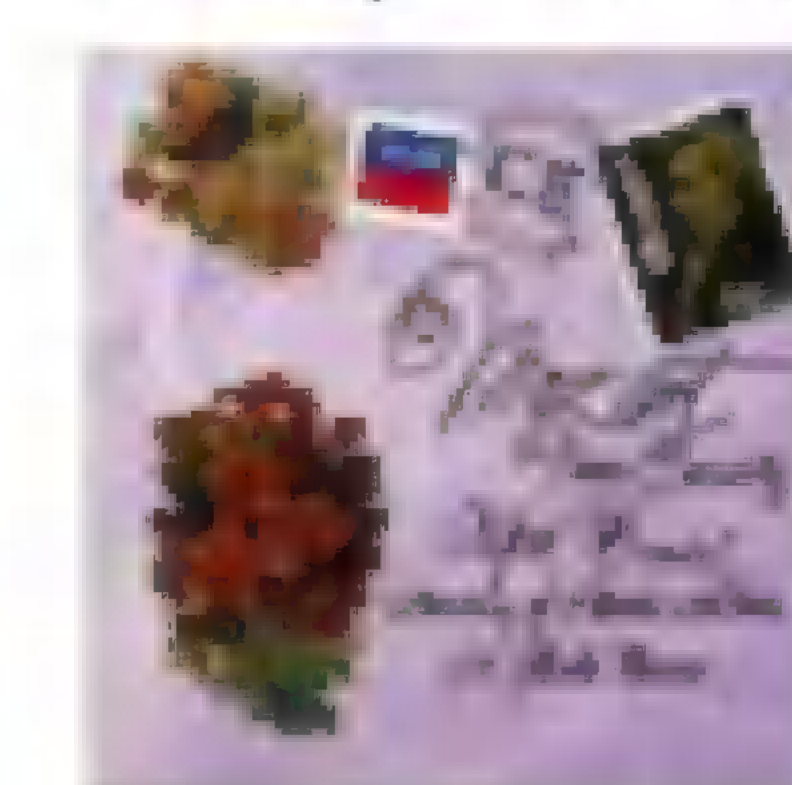
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Rossini
Il barbiere di Siviglia
Sols; ASMF / Marriner
478 2497DB2 (6/83^h)

Marriner came late to opera but he brings no shortage of zest here. Baltsa, Allen, Araiza and Lloyd strike sparks off each other in a rendition that fizzes from start to finish.

PROMS 2014 LISTINGS

From concerts devoted to Strauss operas and Walton to late-night events featuring the Pet Shop Boys and Laura Mvula, it's all happening at the BBC Proms. Get those diaries out!

Fri July 18 Prom 1 7.30pm

Elgar The Kingdom
Erin Wall *Blessed Virgin Catherine*
Wyn-Rogers *Mary Magdalene*
Andrew Staples *St John*
Christopher Purves *St Peter*
BBC NOW; BBC Symphony Chorus;
BBC SO / Andrew Davis
Broadcast on BBC Two later tonight

Sat July 19 Prom 2 7.30pm

Elgar Pomp and Circumstance
 March No 4 **Tchaikovsky** Fantasy-
 Overture, 'Romeo and Juliet' **Liszt**
 Piano Concerto No 1 **Qigang Chen**
Joie éternelle **Mussorgsky** (orch
 Ravel) *Pictures at an Exhibition*
Haochen Zhang *pf* **Alison Balsom**
tpt **China PO / Long Yu**
Broadcast on BBC Four on July 27

Sun July 20 Prom 3 10.30am

BBC Sport Prom
Programme to include **Mozart** A
 Musical Joke - Presto **Orff** Carmina
 burana - 'O Fortuna' **Prokofiev**
 Romeo and Juliet - Montagues and
 Capulets (Dance of the Knights)
Gabby Logan *presenter* **Crouch**
End Festival Chorus; BBC Concert
Orchestra / Rebecca Miller
Broadcast live on Radio 5 live

Sun July 20 Prom 4 7.30pm

R Panufnik Three Paths to Peace
 (European premiere) **R Strauss** Die
 Frau ohne Schatten - symphonic
 fantasia **Mahler** Symphony No 6
World Orchestra for Peace /
Valery Gergiev
Broadcast on BBC Four on August 14

Mon July 21 Prom 5 7.30pm

R Strauss Till Eulenspiegels lustige
 Streiche **Dvořák** Violin Concerto
Beethoven Symphony No 6,
 'Pastoral'
Julia Fischer *vn* **Tonhalle**
Orchestra Zurich / David Zinman
Broadcast on BBC Four on July 25

Tue July 22 Prom 6 6.30pm

R Strauss Der Rosenkavalier
 (semi-staged; sung in German)
Sols incl **Kate Royal** *Marschallin*

Tara Erraught *Octavian* **Lars Woldt**
Baron Ochs **Teodora Gheorghiu**
Sophie Glyndebourne Festival
Opera; LPO / Robin Ticciati

Wed July 23 Prom 7 6.30pm

Tavener Gnosis (world premiere)
Bartók Violin Concerto No 2
Shostakovich Symphony No 10
Sarah Connolly *mez* **Isabelle Faust**
vn **BBC SO / Jiří Bělohlávek**

Wed July 23 Prom 8 10.15pm

Neil Tennant/Chris Lowe
 Overture to 'Performance' (arr
 R Niles). Pet Shop Boys songs
 (orch A Badalamenti). A Man
 from the Future (orch S Helbig)
 (world premiere)
Pet Shop Boys; BBC Singers;
BBC Concert Orchestra /
Dominic Wheeler

Thu July 24 Prom 9 7.30pm

Brahms Piano Concerto No 1
Janáček Glagolitic Mass (original
 version, reconstr P Wingfield)
Barry Douglas *pf* **Mlada Khudoley**
sop **Yulia Matochkina** *mez* **Mikhail**
Vekua *ten* **Yuri Vorobiev** *bass*
London Symphony Chorus; LSO /
Valery Gergiev

Fri July 25 Prom 10 7.30pm

Walton Variations on a Theme by
 Hindemith **Moeran** Violin Concerto
David Horne Daedalus in Flight
 (London premiere) **Elgar** 'Enigma'
 Variations
Tasmin Little *vn* **BBC Philharmonic**
/ Juanjo Mena

Sat July 26 Prom 11 11am

CBeebies Prom
Programme to include **Barrie**
Bignold Around Sound (world
 premiere **Holst** St Paul's Suite
 - Finale (The Dargason) **Wood**
 Fanfare on British Sea-Songs -
 Hornpipe *plus* music from CBeebies
BBC Philharmonic / Stephen Bell

Sat July 26 Prom 12 8pm

JS Bach St John Passion (sung in
 German)



Another opening, another show: Sir Andrew Davis oversees Elgar's The Kingdom

James Gilchrist *Evangelist*
Neal Davies *Christus* **Lucy**
Crowe *sop* **Clint van der Linde**
counterten **Andrew Kennedy**
ten **Rudolf Rosen** *bar* **Zürcher**
Sing-Akademie; Zurich Chamber
Orchestra / Roger Norrington
Broadcast on BBC Four on July 31

Sun July 27 Prom 13 11am

CBeebies Prom (see Prom 11)
Recorded for future broadcast

Sun July 27 Prom 14 7.30pm

Ravel Valses nobles et
 sentimentales **Holt** Morpheus
 Wakes (world premiere) **Ravel**
 La valse **Durufié** Requiem
Emmanuel Pahud *fl*
Ruby Hughes *sop* **Gerald Finley**
bar **BBC National Chorus of**
Wales; National Youth Choir
of Wales; BBC NOW /
Thierry Fischer

Mon July 28 Prom 15 7.30pm

Dove Gaia (world premiere)
Mozart Piano Concerto No 23
Ravel Daphnis and Chloe
Ingrid Fliter *pf* **BBC Symphony**
Chorus; BBC SO / Josep Pons
Broadcast on BBC Four on August 1

Tue July 29 Prom 16 6.30pm

Balakirev (orch Lyapunov) *Islamey*
Holst Beni Mora **G Prokofiev** Violin

Concerto (world premiere) **Mozart**
 Die Entführung aus dem Serail -
 Overture **Handel** (arr Beecham)
 Solomon - The Arrival of the Queen
 of Sheba **Respighi** Belkis, Queen
 of Sheba
Daniel Hope *vn* **Borusan Istanbul**
PO / Sascha Goetzell
Broadcast on BBC Four on August 31

Tue July 29 Prom 17 10pm

Rameau Deus noster refugium.
 Quam dilecta tabernacula.
 In convertendo Dominus
Rachel Redmond *sop* **Katherine**
Watson *sop* **Reinoud Van**
Mechelen *high* **ten** **Cyril Auvity**
ten **Marc Mauillon** *bar* **Cyril**
Costanzo *bass* **Les Arts Florissants**
/ William Christie

Wed July 30 Prom 18 7.30pm

Birtwistle Night's Black Bird
Ravel Piano Concerto for the
 Left Hand **Mahler** Symphony No 5
Alexandre Tharaud *pf* **BBC**
Philharmonic / Juanjo Mena
Broadcast on BBC Four on August 8

Thu July 31 Prom 19 7.30pm

R Strauss Festival Prelude.
 Deutsche Motette. Four Last Songs
Elgar Symphony No 2
Inger Dam-Jensen *sop* **BBC**
Singers; RLPO / Vasily Petrenko
Broadcast on BBC Four on August 3

Fri August 1 Prom 20 7.30pm
Gurney War Elegy **Beamish** Violin Concerto (London premiere)
Walton Symphony No 1
Anthony Marwood *vn* BBC SO / **Martyn Brabbins**

Sat August 2 Prom 21 7.30pm
Porter Kiss Me, Kate
John Wilson Orch / **John Wilson**

Sun August 3 Prom 22 4.30pm
 War Horse Prom
Programme to include **Bridge** Summer **Elgar** Two Partsongs, Op 26 - The Snow **Holst** Ave Maria; Home they brought her warrior dead **Ravel** Le tombeau de Couperin - excerpts **Sutton** War Horse Suite
Proms Military Wives Choir / **Gareth Malone**; **Cambiata North West**; **BBC Concert Orchestra** / **David Charles Abell**

Sun August 3 Prom 23 8pm
John McLeod The Sun Dances (London premiere) **Beethoven** Symphony No 4 **Mozart** (comp Robert D Levin) Requiem
Carolyn Sampson *sop* **Christine Rice** *mez* **Jeremy Ovenden** *ten* **Neal Davies** *bass* **National Youth Choir of Scotland**; **BBC Scottish SO** / **Donald Runnicles**
Broadcast on BBC Four on August 7

Mon August 4 Prom 24 6.30pm
Vaughan Williams Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis **Mahler** Symphony No 9
BBC Scottish SO / **Donald Runnicles**

Mon August 4 Prom 25 9.15pm
Tavener Ikona of Light. Requiem Fragments (world premiere)
Heath Quartet; **Tallis Scholars** / **Peter Phillips**
Broadcast on BBC Four on August 10

Tue August 5 Prom 26 7.30pm
Berio Sinfonia **Shostakovich** Symphony No 4
London Voices; **European Union Youth Orchestra** / **Semyon Bychkov**

Wed August 6 Prom 27 7pm
Wagner Das Liebesverbot - Overture **Mathias** Violin Concerto **Elgar** Symphony No 1
Matthew Trusler *vn* **BBC NOW** / **Mark Wigglesworth**

Thu August 7 Prom 28 7.30pm
Beethoven Egmont - Overture
Francesconi Duende - The Dark Notes (UK premiere) **Stravinsky** Oedipus rex
Leila Josefowicz *vn* **Allan Clayton** *Oedipus* **Hilary Summers** *Jocasta* **Juha Uusitalo** *Creon*
Brindley Sherratt *Tiresias*
Duncan Rock *Messenger* **Samuel Boden** *Shepherd*; **BBC Singers** (men's voices); **BBC Symphony Chorus** (men's voices); **BBC SO** / **Sakari Oramo**

Fri August 8 Prom 29 6.30pm
Casella Elegia eroica **Chopin** Piano Concerto No 1 **Franck** Symphonic Variations **Saint-Saëns** Symphony No 3, 'Organ'
Benjamin Grosvenor *pf*
David Goode *org* **BBC PO** / **Gianandrea Noseda**

Fri August 8 Prom 30 10.15pm
 Battle of the Bands
Clare Teal *singer/presenter* **Count Pearson Proms Band** / **James Pearson**; **Duke Windsor Proms Band** / **Grant Windsor**
Broadcast on BBC Four on August 17

Sat August 9 Prom 31 7.30pm
Berlioz Overture 'Le corsaire' **Elgar** Sea Pictures **Grime** Near Midnight (London premiere) **Beethoven** Symphony No 3, 'Eroica'
Alice Coote *mez* **Hallé** / **Mark Elder**
Broadcast on BBC Four on August 15

Sun August 10 Prom 32 4pm
Beethoven Symphony No 1
Bruch Violin Concerto No 1
Walton (arr C Palmer) Henry V: A Shakespeare Scenario
London Philharmonic Choir; **Academy of St Martin in the Fields** / **Joshua Bell** *vn*; **Neville Marriner**

Sun August 10 Prom 33 7.45pm
Stravinsky Petrushka (1911 version)
Prokofiev Piano Concerto No 1
Birtwistle Sonance Severance 2000 **Lutoslawski** Concerto for Orchestra
Louis Schwizgebel *pf* **National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain** / **Edward Gardner**
Broadcast on BBC Four on August 28

Mon August 11 Prom 34 7.30pm
R Strauss Tod und Verklärung.
 Burleske **Mozart** Rondo, K386
Nielsen Symphony No 5



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The Lark Ascending: Janine Jansen performs Vaughan Williams's timeless classic

Francesco Piemontesi *pf* BBC NOW / Thomas Søndergård

Tue August 12 Prom 35 7pm
Maxwell Davies Caroline Mathilde – Suite from Act 2 **Walton** Violin Concerto **Sibelius** The Swan of Tuonela, Symphony No 5
Mary Bevan *sop* **Kitty Whately** *mez* **James Ehnes** *violin* BBC NOW / Thomas Søndergård
Broadcast on BBC Four on August 21

Wed August 13 Prom 36 6.30pm
Alwyn Symphony No 1 **Vaughan Williams** The Wasps – Overture, The Lark Ascending, Job: A Masque for Dancing
Janine Jansen *vn* BBC SO / **Sakari Oramo**

Wed August 13 Prom 37 10.15pm
Steve Reich It's Gonna Rain, The Desert Music
BBC Singers; Endymion / David Hill

Thu August 14 Prom 38 7.30pm
Sibelius Finlandia, Symphony No 2
Maxwell Davies Symphony No 5
Bridge Oration
Leonard Elschenbroich *vc*
BBC Philharmonic / John Storgårds

Fri August 15 Prom 39 7.30pm
Rameau Les Indes galantes – Suite
Rands Concerto for Piano and Orchestra (UK premiere)
Mozart Symphony No 1
R Strauss Ein Heldenleben
Jonathan Biss *pf* BBC Scottish SO / **Markus Stenz**

Sat August 16 Prom 40 6.30pm
Schubert Symphony No 5
Mahler Symphony No 4
Camilla Tilling *sop* LSO / **Bernard Haitink**

Sat August 16 Prom 41 10.15pm
Mozart Symphony No 40
Tabakova Spinning a Yarn
Mason Meld (world premiere)
Alexandra Wood *vn*
Stevie Wishart *hurdy-gurdy*
Chantage; Aurora Orchestra / Nicholas Collon

Sun August 17 Prom 42 7.30pm
Stephan Music for Orchestra (1912) **Kelly** Elegy for strings, in memoriam Rupert Brooke
Butterworth (orch P Brookes) Six Songs from 'A Shropshire Lad'
Vaughan Williams Pastoral Symphony
Allan Clayton *ten*
Roderick Williams *bar*
BBC Scottish SO / Andrew Manze
Broadcast on BBC Four on August 22

Mon August 18 Prom 43 7.30pm
Stravinsky Scherzo fantastique
Rachmaninov The Bells
Stravinsky Violin Concerto
Tchaikovsky 1812 Overture
Baiba Skride *vn* **Luba Orgonášová** *sop* **Stuart Skelton** *ten*
Mikhail Petrenko *bar*
Crouch End Festival Chorus; BBC Symphony Chorus; BBC SO / Edward Gardner

Tue August 19 Prom 44 6.30pm
R Strauss Don Juan
Elgar Cello Concerto
Berlioz Symphonie fantastique
Truls Mørk *vc*
Melbourne SO / Andrew Davis
Broadcast on BBC Four on August 24

Tue August 19 Prom 45 10.15pm
 Late night with **Laura Mvula**
Songs to include Father, Father, Flying Without You, Make Me Lovely

Laura Mvula *singer* Metropole Orchestra / **Jules Buckley**

Wed August 20 Prom 46 7.30pm
Mozart The Marriage of Figaro – Overture **Kareem Roustom** Ramal (UK premiere) **Ayal Adler** Resonating Sounds (UK premiere)
Ravel Rapsodie espagnole, Alborada del gracioso, Pavane pour une infante défunte, Boléro
West-Eastern Divan Orchestra / Daniel Barenboim
Broadcast on BBC Four on August 29

Thu August 21 Prom 47 7.30pm
Britten War Requiem
Susan Gritton *sop* **Toby Spence** *ten* **Hanno Müller-Brachmann** *bar*
BBC Proms Youth Choir; CBSO / Andris Nelsons

Fri August 22 Prom 48 7.30pm
Haukur Tómasson Magma (UK premiere) **Schumann** Piano Concerto **Leifs** Geysir
Beethoven Symphony No 5
Jonathan Biss *pf* Iceland SO / **Ilan Volkov**

Sat August 23 Prom 49 7.30pm
Ravel Mother Goose – ballet
Szymanowski Songs of a Fairy Princess **Jukka Tiensuu** Voice verser (UK premiere) **Rimsky-Korsakov** Scheherazade
Anu Komi *sop* BBC SO / **Sakari Oramo**

Sun August 24 Prom 50 7.30pm
Janáček From the House of the Dead – Overture **Dvořák** Cello Concerto **Beethoven** Symphony No 7
Alisa Weilerstein *vc* Czech PO / **Jiří Bělohlávek**

Mon August 25 Prom 51 3pm
 Free Prom
Dvořák Slavonic Dances – Op 46 No 1; Op 72 No 2; Op 46 No 8
Grieg Piano Concerto **Bax** Roscatha
Whelan Riverdance: A Symphonic Suite (UK premiere)
Zhang Zuo *pf* Ulster Orchestra / **Jac van Steen**

Mon August 25 Prom 52 7.30pm
Brahms (orch I Fischer) Hungarian Dances – No 6; No 7; No 14 **Mozart** March, K335/I **Schubert** Symphony No 8, 'Unfinished'
Josef Strauss Sphären-Klänge
Johann Strauss II Vergnügungszug

Dvořák Legend, Op 59 No 10
Kodály Dances of Galánta
Budapest Festival Orchestra / Iván Fischer

Tue August 26 Prom 53 7pm
Brahms Symphonies – Nos 3 and 4
Budapest Festival Orchestra / Iván Fischer

Tue August 26 Prom 54 10.15pm
Beethoven Missa solemnis
Lucy Crowe *sop* **Jennifer Johnston** *mez* **Michael Spyres** *ten*
Matthew Rose *bass* Monteverdi Choir; English Baroque Soloists / **John Eliot Gardiner**

Wed August 27 Prom 55 7.30pm
Debussy La mer **Chin Su**
Tchaikovsky Symphony No 6, 'Pathétique'
Wu Wei sheng Seoul PO / **Myung-Whun Chung**

Thu August 28 Prom 56 7.30pm
Holst The Planets **Schoenberg** Five Orchestral Pieces, Op 16
Scriabin Prometheus: The Poem of Fire
Alexander Toradze *pf* London Philharmonic Choir; LPO / **Vladimir Jurowski**

Fri August 29 Prom 57 7.30pm
Mahler Symphony No 2, 'Resurrection'
Kate Royal *sop* **Christianne Stotijn** *mez* Swedish Radio Choir; Philharmonia Chorus; Swedish RSO / **Daniel Harding**

Sat August 30 Prom 58 7.30pm
R Strauss Salome (sung in German)
Sols incl **Burkhard Ulrich**
Herod **Ildikó Komlósi** *Herodias*
Nina Stemme *Salome*
Samuel Youn *Jokanaan*
Thomas Blondelle *Narraboth*
Deutsche Oper Berlin / Donald Runnicles

Sun August 31 Prom 59 7.30pm
R Strauss Elektra (sung in German)
Christine Goerke *Elektra*
Gun-Brit Barkmin *Chrysothemis*
Dame Felicity Palmer *Clytemnestra*
BBC Singers; BBC SO / Semyon Bychkov

Mon September 1 Prom 60 7.30pm
Berlioz Overture, 'Le carnaval romain'
Walton Sinfonia concertante

(original version) **Respighi**
Roman Festivals. Fountains of Rome.
Pines of Rome
Danny Driver *pf* RPO /
Charles Dutoit

Tue September 2 Prom 61 7.30pm
Glinka Ruslan and Lyudmila -
Overture **Zhou Long** Postures
(European premiere) **Rachmaninov**
Symphony No 2
Andreas Haefliger *pf* Singapore
SO / Orchestra Lan Shui

Wed September 3 Prom 62
7.30pm
Beethoven Symphony No 8
Berlioz Romeo and Juliet - Romeo
Alone **Dvořák** Symphony No 9,
'From the New World'
Stuttgart RSO / Roger Norrington

Thu September 4 Prom 63 7.30pm
John Adams Short Ride in a Fast
Machine. Saxophone Concerto (UK
premiere) **Mahler** Symphony No 1
Timothy McAllister *alto sax*
BBC SO / Marin Alsop
Broadcast on BBC Four this evening

Fri September 5 Prom 64 6.30pm
Rachmaninov Symphonic Dances
Stravinsky The Firebird
BPO / Simon Rattle

Fri September 5 Prom 65 10.15pm
Late night with Paloma Faith
Songs to include Picking Up the
Pieces. Can't Rely on You. Only Love
Can Hurt Like This. Upside Down
Paloma Faith *singer* Urban Voices
Collective; **Guy Barker Orchestra /**
Guy Barker
BBC Four this evening

Sat September 6 Prom 66 7pm
JS Bach St Matthew Passion
(staging by Peter Sellars;
sung in German)
Mark Padmore *Evangelist*
Christian Gerhaher *Christus*
Camilla Tilling *sop* Magdalena
Kožená mez Topi Lehtipuu *ten*
Eric Owens *ten* Berlin Radio Choir;
BPO / Simon Rattle

Sun September 7 Prom 67 3.30pm
Behzad Ranjbaran Seemorgh
(European premiere) **Rachmaninov**
Piano Concerto No 2 **Tchaikovsky**
Symphony No 5
Denis Matsuev *pf* Qatar PO /
Han-Na Chang
Broadcast on BBC Four on Sep 12

Sun September 7 Prom 68 7.30pm
Brahms Academic Festival Overture
Jörg Widmann Flûte en suite (UK
premiere) **Brahms** Symphony No 1
Joshua Smith *fl* Cleveland
Orchestra / **Franz Welser-Möst**
Broadcast on BBC Four this evening

Mon September 8 Prom 69 7pm
Brahms Tragic Overture
Jörg Widmann Teufel Amor (UK
premiere) **Brahms** Symphony No 2
Cleveland Orchestra /
Franz Welser-Möst

Mon September 8 Prom 70
10.15pm
Maxwell Davies Concert Overture,
'Ebb of Winter' (London premiere).
Strathclyde Concerto No 4. An
Orkney Wedding, with Sunrise
Dimitri Ashkenazy *cl*
SCO / Ben Gernon
Broadcast on BBC Four on Sep 11

Tue September 9 Prom 71 7.30pm
Copland Appalachian Spring - Suite.
Quiet City. Rodeo - Four Dance
Episodes **Dave Brubeck** (arr
C Brubeck) Blue Rondo à la Turk
(UK premiere) **Chris Brubeck**
Travels in Time for Three (UK
premiere) **Time for Three; BBC**
Concert Orchestra / Keith Lockhart

Wed September 10 Prom 72
7.30pm
Birtwistle Exody **Walton** Viola
Concerto **Vaughan Williams**
Fantasia on 'Greensleeves'.
Symphony No 4 **Lise Berthaud** *va*
BBC SO / Andrew Litton

Thu September 11 Prom 73 7pm
Mahler Symphony No 3
Gerhild Romberger *mez* Leipzig
Opera and Gewandhaus Choir
(women's voices); Leipzig
Gewandhaus Children's Choir;
Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra /
Riccardo Chailly

Thu September 11 Prom 74 10.15pm
Late night with Rufus Wainwright
Songs to include Poses. Going to a
Town. Cigarettes and Chocolate Milk.
Over the Rainbow. Dinner at Eight.
Me and Liza
Rufus Wainwright *singer* Britten
Sinfonia / **Johannes Debus**

Fri September 12 Prom 75 7.30pm
Cerha Paraphrase on the Opening
of Beethoven's Symphony No 9

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Beethoven Symphony No 9, 'Choral'
Christina Landshamer *sop* **Gerhild Romberger** *mez* **Steve Davis** *lim ten* **Dmitry Belosselskiy** *bass*
Leipzig Opera Chorus;
London Symphony Chorus;
Leipzig Gewandhaus Choir,
Children's Choir and Orchestra /
Riccardo Chailly

Sat September 13 Prom 76 7.30pm

The Last Night of the Proms 2014
Higgins Velocity (world premiere)
Arnold Overture 'Peterloo' (world premiere)
Walton Façade - Popular Song
Chausson Poème
Tavener Song for Athene
R Strauss Taillefer
Khachaturian Gayane - Sabre Dance
Ravel Tzigane
Kern (arr R Williams) Show Boat - 'Ol' Man River'
Trad (arr Williams) Joshua Fit the Battle of Jericho
Sherman/Sherman Mary Poppins - medley
Ansell Plymouth Hoe
Arne (arr Sargent) Rule, Britannia!
Elgar Pomp and Circumstance March No 1
Parry (orch Elgar) Jerusalem *plus*
The National Anthem (arr Britten)
Janine Jansen *vn* **Elizabeth Watts** *sop* **John Daszak** *ten* **Roderick Williams** *bar* **BBC Singers**; **BBC Symphony Chorus**; **BBC SO** / **Sakari Oramo**

Broadcast live on BBC Two (first half) and BBC One (second half)

Chamber music at Cadogan Hall

Mon July 21 PCM 1 1pm

Rameau Pièces de clavecin en concerts
Les Arts Florissants /
Paolo Zanzu *hpd*

Mon July 28 PCM 2 1pm

CPE Bach Trio Sonata in A major. Violin Sonata in C minor. Keyboard Sonata in E minor. Trio Sonata in C minor, 'Sanguineus and Melancholicus'
Rachel Podger *vn* **Katy Bircher** *f* **Bojan Cčić** *vn* **Tomasz Pokrzywiński** *vc* **Kristian Bezuidenhout** *fp*

Mon August 4 PCM 3 1pm

Mozart Serenade in C minor, K388
R Strauss Suite in B flat major for 13 wind instruments
London Winds / **Michael Collins** *cl*

Mon August 11 PCM 4 1pm

Prokofiev Five Melodies. Sonata in C major for two violins
Schubert Fantasie, D934



Sakari Oramo

The BBC SO's chief conductor on taking the helm for his first ever 'Last Night'

Conducting the Last Night is a great privilege and a chance to continue a long-held tradition... I'm awaiting it eagerly. It is an honour to join the long line of conductors who have done this show over the years.

Being the Last Night, there's an emphasis on English music - can you explain why you have developed such an affinity with it? I like good music. Not because it's English or indeed from any other nation, but because

good music feels good to me. Ignorance is the worst enemy of appreciating good music, and that's what I am fighting against.

You've said that 'It would be healthy for English music not to be seen as "English" but as "music" - and damn good music, too'...

In its appreciation of the arts, mankind is still in a phase of development where it must categorise things

before being able to enjoy them. I am no different, but I think intensely about this. Of course, most music has relations to language, folk music, culture, traditions etc - just saying that a piece is English doesn't give any relevant attributes to it. Look beyond! Elgar and Britten, for instance, are diametrically opposed in everything they express in their music.

Are there any pieces on the programme that you are particularly looking forward to conducting?

Strauss's *Taillefer* is a real find and a wonderful piece. It's astonishing that from such a well-known composer, completely unknown works can still emerge almost out of the blue!

How will you cope with the Last Night's rowdy audience?

I'll probably join them for the singing. The Last Night isn't about being quiet!

Janine Jansen *vn* **Sakari Oramo** *vn* **Itamar Golan** *pf*

Mon August 18 PCM 5 1pm

R Strauss Eight Poems from 'Letzte Blätter' **Wolf** Mörike - and Goethe-Lieder - selection
R Strauss Four Songs, Op 27 - Nos 1, 3 & 4
Alice Coote *mez* **Julius Drake** *pf*

Mon August 25 PCM 6 1pm

Mozart Piano Sonata, K311
Mahler Piano Quartet **R Strauss** (arr R Leopold) Metamorphosen
Louis Schwizgebel *pf* **Katarzyna Budnik-Gałązka** *va* **Marcin Zdunik** *vc* **Tomasz Januchta** *db*
Royal String Quartet

Mon September 1 PCM 7 1pm

Chopin Ballade No 1 **Mompou** Paisajes
Ravel Valses nobles et sentimentales
Weir Day Break Shadows Flee (world premiere)

Gounod (arr Liszt) Waltz from 'Faust' **Benjamin Grosvenor** *pf*

Mon September 8 PCM 8 1pm

Shostakovich (arr L Atovmyan) Four Waltzes
Walton Façade
Ian Bostridge, **Dame Felicity Palmer** *reciters* **Nash Ensemble** / **John Wilson**

Saturday Matinees at Cadogan

Sat August 2 PSM 1 3pm

Handel Alessandro - Overture
Hasse Artemisia - Overture
Paisiello Olimpiade - 'E mi lasci così?'
Sciogli, oh Dio! le sue catene'
Lully Phaeton - suite
Vivaldi Giustino - 'Vedrò con mio diletto'
Gluck Orphée et Eurydice - Dance of the Blessed Spirits; Dance of the Furies. Iphigénie en Aulide - 'Ma fille, Jupiter'
Myrsini Margariti *sop* **Irini Karalanni** *mez*

Armonia Atenea / **George Petrou**

Sat August 9 PSM 2 3pm

CPE Bach Symphony in B minor, 'Hamburg'
Birtwistle Endless Parade
Honegger Pastoral d'été
Maxwell Davies Sinfonia
Sibelius Rakastava
Håkan Hardenberger *tpt*
Lapland CO / **John Storgårds**

Sat August 30 PSM 3 3pm

Maxwell Davies Linguae ignis. Revelation and Fall. A Mirror of Whitering Light
Timothy Gill *vc* **Rebecca Bottone** *sop* **London Sinfonietta** / **Sian Edwards**

Sat September 6 PSM 4 3pm

Birtwistle Verses for Ensembles. Dinah and Nick's Love Song. Meridian
Christine Rice *mez* **Exaudi**; **BCMG** / **Oliver Knussen**

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V O T E F O R

Artist of the Year 2014

As we approach the Gramophone Awards 2014, we're once again inviting our readers to help us choose the artist whose contribution to recorded classical music in 2013-14 has been particularly exceptional. Here are the 10 nominees...

Sponsored by



Leonidas Kavakos violinist/conductor

Kavakos has had quite a year, performing on many of the world's great stages and with the greatest orchestras to universal acclaim. He recorded Brahms's Violin Concerto with Chailly and the Gewandhaus Orchestra for Decca ('evidence of abundant temperament and passion' according to Duncan Druce last December) and made a superb set, with Yuja Wang at the piano, of the Brahms sonatas – an Editor's Choice this month. Increasingly seen with a baton in hand, Kavakos has come a long way since taking *Gramophone's* Concerto Award back in 1991 for the Sibelius Violin Concerto in its original version for BIS.

Iestyn Davies countertenor

Back in 2009, Michael McManus was already predicting great things for this singer who, he said, 'can dominate a stage with all the physical poise and balance that characterises the best singers'. And he was right. Since winning *Gramophone's* Recital Award in 2012, Iestyn Davies's career has continued to soar with appearances at the Met, Carnegie Hall, English National Opera and the Opéra-Comique, among many others. He's also been very busy in

the recording studio, releasing 'The Art of Melancholy' (page 85 this issue, Hyperion), 'Arise, my Muse' (5/14, Wigmore Hall Live), Handel's oratorio arias (3/14, Vivat), Britten Canticles (1/14, Wigmore Hall Live), Bach's *Christmas Oratorio* (11/13) and *St John Passion* (5/13, Hyperion), Handel's *Belsazzar* (12/13, Les Arts Florissants Editions) and Chandos Anthems (7/13, Hyperion).

Yannick Nézet-Séguin conductor

Safely installed in Philadelphia, in addition to his post in Rotterdam, Nézet-Séguin is one of the most sought-after conductors of the day. He is also one of the busiest recording artists, having released a new *Così fan tutte* (11/13) and a set of the Schumann symphonies (5/14, both DG), a superb live recording of Mahler's *Das Lied von der Erde* (12/13, LPO) and a really impressive Tchaikovsky *Pathétique* (DG, 'without question one of the finest *Pathétiques* to have come my way in the last 30 or so years' – Rob Cowan last December). In addition,

he proved a stylish partner to Miloš Karadaglić for the guitarist's Rodrigo disc (3/14, DG). And, of course, he continues to explore one of his specialities, the symphonies of Bruckner, for ATMA.

Renaud Capuçon violinist

A huge star in France, Capuçon's reputation rides high internationally, too, thanks largely to his long relationship with Virgin Classics (now Erato). Playing a Guarneri that once belonged to Isaac Stern, Capuçon has proved as magnificent (and generous) a chamber player as his instrument's former owner. His most recent disc, reviewed in May, coupled Bach and Pēteris Vasks – an imaginative pairing that had Ivan Moody commenting that Capuçon 'has a wonderful sense of line, following the direction of every melody or melodic tag unflaggingly. The music is allowed to breathe, given space, and the sound is thus at once intimate and vast.'

Mariss Jansons conductor

He may have handed in his notice as musical boss of Amsterdam's Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, but Jansons will leave behind an impressive legacy, with a

PHOTOGRAPHY: DANIEL REGAN/DECCA, MARCO BORGREVE, MAT HENNEK, BENJAMIN EALOVEGA



particular focus on the music of Mahler of which he has proved a powerful advocate (as witness a superb Mahler Eighth, 9/13). He still continues to lead his equally magnificent Munich-based Bavarian RSO and this year has given us that mountain range of the symphonic literature, the complete Beethoven symphonies; Richard Osborne described it as 'an exceptional realisation of Beethoven's nine symphonies, one of those rare occasions when one is left with a feeling of having been in the presence of the thing itself'. (12/13)

Mahan Esfahani harpsichordist

As the first harpsichordist to emerge from the BBC's New Generation Artists scheme, Esfahani has been attracting a new audience to his instrument (he was the first harpsichordist to be granted a solo concert in the Proms Chamber Music series). This year saw his debut disc for Hyperion, a timely CPE Bach collection, which was awarded an Editor's Choice in February. Since then, a recording from Wigmore Hall Live – another Editor's Choice – spans the centuries by linking Byrd, Bach and Ligeti to wonderful effect, showcasing Esfahani's 'flexible, articulate and deeply musical interpretations' (Jed Distler, 6/14).

Alisa Weilerstein cellist

The American cellist Alisa Weilerstein made her Decca debut with the startling and uncompromising coupling of cello concertos by Edward Elgar and Elliott Carter – chalk and cheese, but in the hands of this probing, intense player linked by an engrossing immersion in their very different musical worlds. 'Her developing band of fans will devour this CD,' wrote Peter Dickinson of this Editor's Choice in February last

year. Weilerstein's way with the Elgar was powerful enough to lure Daniel Barenboim back to perform the work again, something he'd not done since he conducted it for his late wife, Jacqueline du Pré. Her equally absorbing Dvořák concerto is reviewed in this issue on page 36.

Alina Ibragimova violinist

Ibragimova has been building an enviable reputation as a player of thoughtful, emotionally engaging musicianship and has forged a number of hugely rewarding partnerships. One of the most successful is with the French pianist Cédric Tiberghien (with whom she made a very fine set of the complete Beethoven violin sonatas for Wigmore Hall Live). Recently, the duo gave us all of Schubert's music for violin and piano in a two-disc set from Hyperion, of which Duncan Druce commented (9/13) that 'their playing is constantly graced by small touches of *rubato*, never very much but enough to give a sense of freedom and individuality to each phrase'.

Jean-Efflam Bavouzet pianist

For many years Bavouzet was known mainly to piano aficionados, and his discs remained a closely guarded secret, but his contract with Chandos changed all that and a constant stream of magnificent recordings has since flowed – each garnering a magnificent review (his 'Debussy: Complete Works for Piano, Vol 4' won him a *Gramophone* Award in 2009). This year he brought out the Prokofiev piano concertos ('Throughout, Bavouzet displays a light touch and laudable levels of physical stamina, with a firm grasp of the very different personalities of each piece' – wrote Rob Cowan, 3/14) and also continued his

equally praised cycles of the piano sonatas of Haydn (7/13) and Beethoven ('an artist of exceptional calibre establishing a position as an important player of this composer', said Stephen Plaistow, 2/14).

Vasily Petrenko conductor

Having won the hearts of the Liverpool music-loving public with his charm, enthusiasm and musicality, Petrenko's next challenge is with the Oslo Philharmonic Orchestra (which proved such a major stepping stone in Mariss Jansons's career). With his Liverpool orchestra, Petrenko has continued his very fine Shostakovich symphony cycle for Naxos, and this year has given us highly praised accounts of Nos 4, 7 and 14 ('Perhaps the best of Petrenko's much-praised cycle, and a strong contender for "best in catalogue",' declared David Gutman of the Fourth in November). As a much-welcome addendum to the Shostakovich symphonies for Naxos, Petrenko – with his new Norwegian orchestra and soloist Truls Mørk – made a very fine recording of the two cello concertos for Ondine ('They certainly find the combination of weight and impetus that is de rigueur in these pieces,' wrote David Fanning, 6/14). **G**

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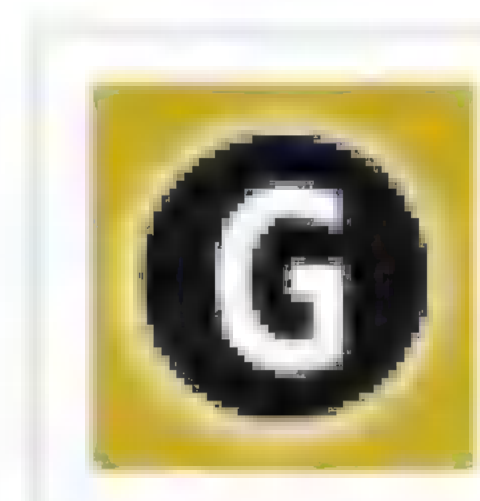
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Editor's Choice

Martin Cullingford's pick of the finest recordings reviewed in this issue

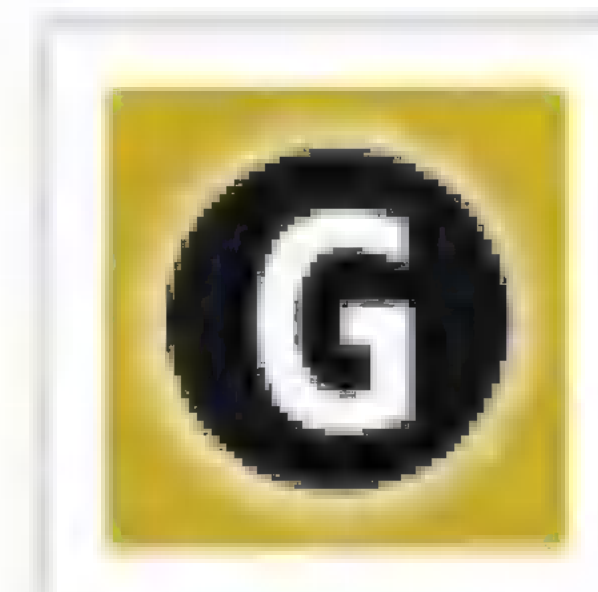


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Recording of the Month

Andrew Achenbach listens to a Walton pairing that compares with the composer's own recordings



Walton

Violin Concerto^a. Symphony No 1

^aTasmin Little *vn*

BBC Symphony Orchestra / Edward Gardner

Chandos CHSA5136 (77' • DDD/DSD)

Edward Gardner presides over blisteringly eloquent and splendidly unbuttoned accounts of both these Walton masterworks, the First Symphony's vehement opening *Allegro assai* in particular unfolding with a bite, purpose and snarling intensity to match any rival. (I was even put in mind of the composer's own dynamic, superbly paced interpretation with the Philharmonia from the early 1950s – and that's saying something.) Gardner has a sharp ear and directs with an unwavering sense of the long line. What's more, the BBC Symphony Orchestra are with him every step of the way, their strings especially extracting every ounce of expressive clout from Walton's irresistibly sinewy counterpoint: I love the feisty rhythmic snap of the cellos from fig 7 or 1'46" during the first movement's exposition; and, a little later on between 10 and 11 (2'30" and 2'44"), listen to those irresistibly full-throated violas and cellos really digging into their parts.

The *scherzo* (marked *Presto con malizia*) fairly rattles along at a daredevil pace that recalls Leonard Slatkin's underrated LPO account (Virgin, 8/88 – nla) – and even has a welcome dash or two of extra venom to match. On balance, André Previn and the LSO remain unsurpassed here, though few could surely resist the brazen swagger on



'This exceptionally vital newcomer occupies a lofty position within the First Symphony's distinguished discography'

show in the closing stages (listen out for some truly roistering horn trills). Absolutely no complaints, either, with the anguished slow movement, where the orchestral playing is as smoulderingly passionate as one could desire. Time to heap praise upon the BBC SO's woodwind principals: in its plaintive beauty the opening flute solo surely comes close to the ideal, and I guarantee it will be many a moon before you hear more sweetly expressive work from both clarinet and oboe in the pages that follow. Searingly intense, songful work, too, from the violas and cellos and then first violins when they take up the clarinet's aching beautiful secondary melody (precisely *appassionato vibrato espressivo* as

marked). What a devastatingly personal, superbly concise essay this is: Walton at the very peak of his powers.

As is well known by now, the symphony's finale caused the composer no end of grief, so much so that the work's long-awaited world premiere in November 1934 by the LSO under the baton of Sir Hamilton Harty comprised merely the first three movements. By August of the following year, however, the finale was ready; on November 6, 1935, Harty and the BBC SO scored a triumph with the completed symphony at London's Queen's Hall (and, on December 9-10, 1935, the conductor took it into the recording studio, this time again with the LSO). The finale's altogether more extrovert, crowd-pleasing demeanour continues to prove a stumbling block for some commentators, who find Walton's sanguine inspiration worryingly incompatible with and/or failing to measure up to the exalted benchmark of what has gone before (in the *Maestoso* outer portions there are unmistakable echoes of his film music and ceremonial offerings to come). Refreshingly, Gardner approaches the movement with no such lingering hang-ups. Indeed, his formidably athletic conception dazzles and can boast a clinching symphonic reach reminiscent of, say, Harty's legendary pioneering recording or Vernon Handley's outstandingly cogent Bournemouth SO version (EMI, 8/89 – nla). Just listen to the way he drives home the towering climax at fig 137 or 8'23" – thrilling – and what reserves of tender eloquence he finds in the principal trumpet's valedictory,



'A sharp ear and an unwavering sense of the long line': Edward Gardner gets exceptional results in two orchestral masterworks by William Walton

ineffably moving 'last post' prior to the grandiloquent coda (one of those 'special' Walton moments).

Make no mistake, then, this exceptionally vital newcomer occupies a lofty position within this symphony's distinguished discography, and it's followed by a comparably involving rendering of the ripely romantic and dazzlingly virtuoso Violin Concerto that Walton fashioned in 1938-39 for the great Jascha Heifetz. Tasmin Little's earlier Decca recording with Andrew Litton and the

Bournemouth SO (10/95) had plenty going for it but this Chandos successor is, I think, even more rewarding. Not only do Gardner and the BBC SO provide the most insightful and charismatic support but Little's playing combines fire, sensuality and alluring sweetness of tone (her instrument is a marvellous 1757 Guadagnini).

Little's gorgeously fragrant delivery of the concerto's luscious opening theme immediately tugs the emotions in a way that recalls both of Heifetz's recordings (from 1941 and 1950 with Eugene

Goossens and the composer respectively), while Gardner sees to it that the stunning orchestral paragraph from 7'47" flares up to magnificent effect. Elsewhere, the outer sections of the central Neapolitan *scherzo* have a truly memorable swagger and mischief about them (these performers' teasingly capricious treatment of the winsome second subject will make you smile). How perceptively, too, Little and Gardner quarry those cherishably Elgarian undertones of the finale's wistfully intimate accompanied cadenza. Joyously skipping piccolos and clarinets usher in the exuberant *Alla marcia* coda to crown an abundantly communicative display that, quite simply, rekindled my love for what is a gloriously big-hearted, consummately crafted work.

Heaps to savour and cherish, in sum; certainly, seasoned Waltonians will have a ball. With magnificently truthful sound and judicious balance throughout, this terrific coupling should be snapped up without delay. **G**

Sym No 1 – selected comparisons:

LSO, Hurty (1/36th, 12/93) (DUTY) CDAX8003

Philb Orch, Walton (2/53th) (EMI) 968944-2

LSO, Previn (1/67th, 5/02) 74321 92575-2

Vn Conc – selected comparisons:

Heifetz, Cincinnati SO, Goossens (1/42nd) (NAXO) 8 110939

Heifetz, Philb Orch, Walton (5/51st) (NAXO) 8 111367

Listening points Your guide to the disc's memorable moments

Track 1: Symphony No 1, 1st movt

Beam to 8'54" to hear Gardner and the BBC SO in full cry and riding the maelstrom in exhilarating fashion as the mighty recapitulation heaves into view.

Track 3: 3rd movt

Between 2'30" and 3'47" you'll encounter some ravishingly lovely orchestral playing, the BBC woodwind principals covering themselves in glory as Walton entrusts them with solo lines of the utmost expressive beauty.

Track 4: Finale

Listen from 7'21" for an object lesson in how to build tension and excitement – and how Gardner nails the symphony's magnificent, cymbal-topped apex

as the two sets of timpani make their presence felt for the first time.

Track 6: Violin Concerto, 2nd movt

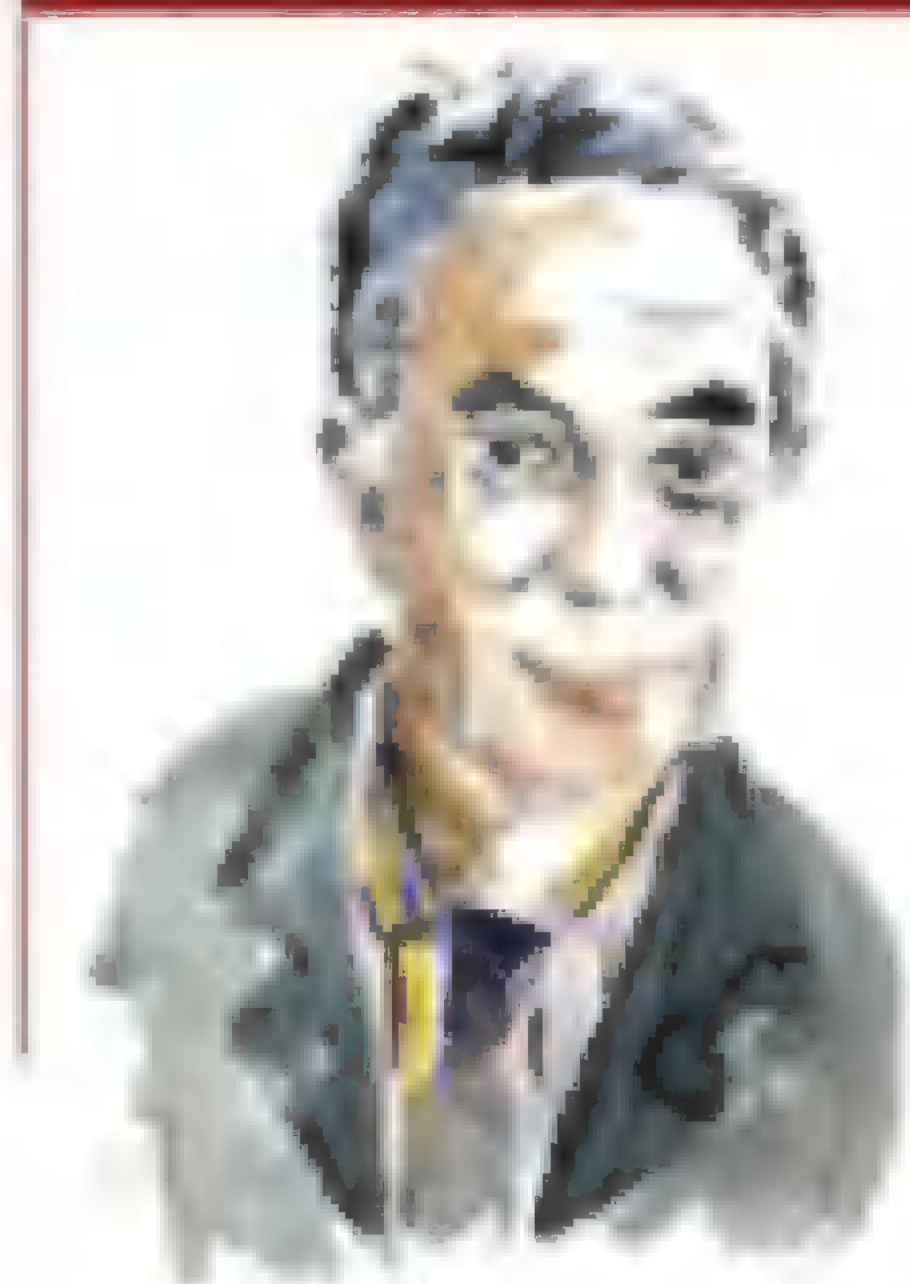
Try from 1'01" onwards. Now here's a real, breathing partnership! What delicious *rubato* and beaming affection Little and Gardner impart to this movement's secondary idea, its flirtatious charm conveyed to entrancingly idiomatic effect.

Track 7: Finale

Begin at 7'38". This is the work's emotional core, as the sublimely inevitable return of the opening theme ushers in a wonderful accompanied cadenza consciously harking back to Elgar's masterly example in his own Violin Concerto.



Orchestral



Geoffrey Norris on Khachaturian's Violin Concerto from James Ehnes:

'This is a performance that abides by musical perspective while bringing terrific character to the mix' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 37**



David Threasher reviews Rattle's Berlin Schumann symphony cycle:

'Rattle finds the myriad colours with which the composer imbued his music; there's the expected virtuosity, too' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 41**

JS Bach • Liszt • Stravinsky

JS Bach Concerto for Two Keyboards, BWV1061^a

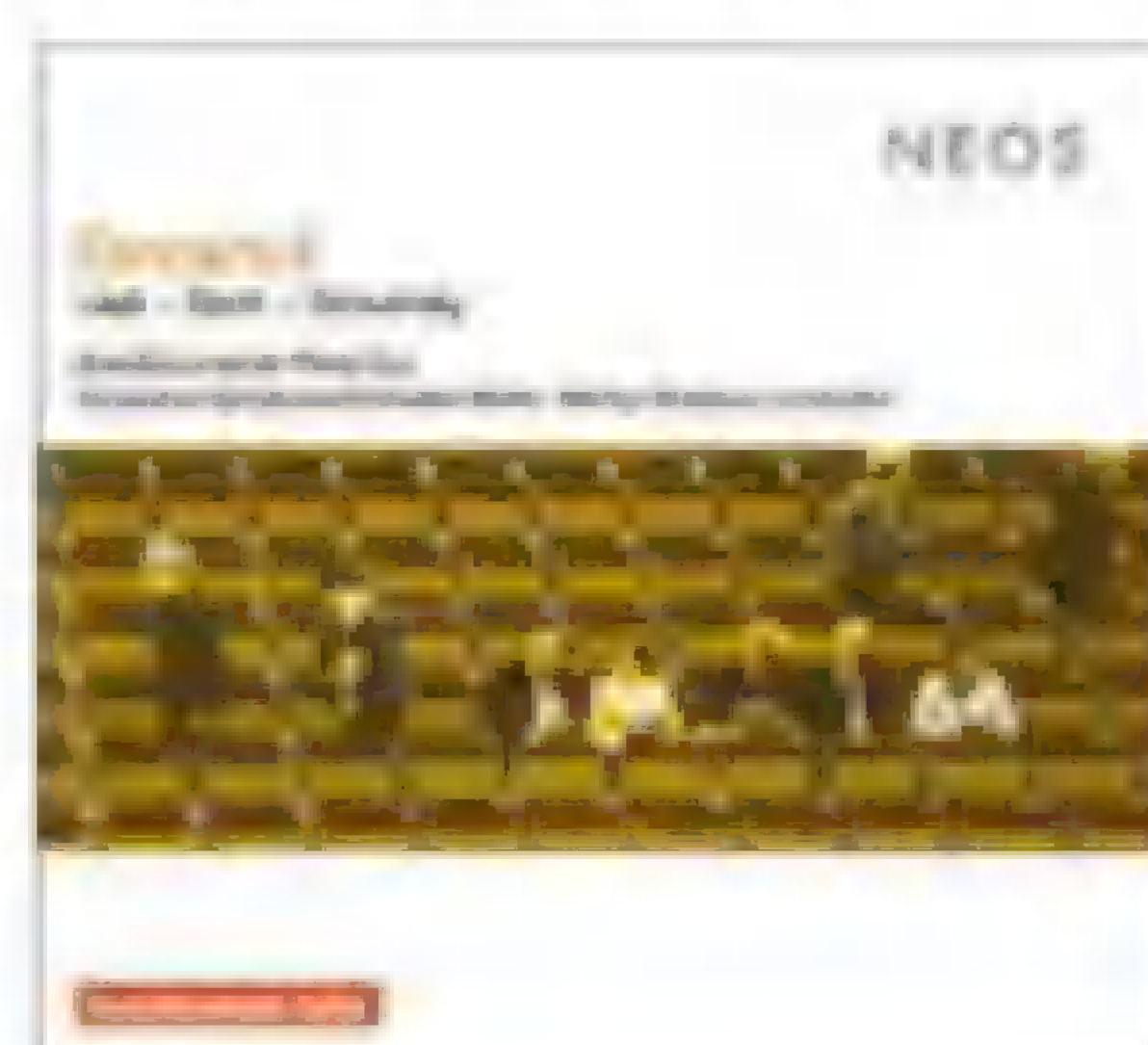
Liszt Concerto pathétique (transcr Heucke)^a

Stravinsky Concerto for Two Pianos

GrauSchumacher Piano Duo; ^aDeutsches

Symphonie-Orchester Berlin / Martyn Brabbins

Neos © NEOS21302 (62' • DDD)



This year's winner of the Strangest Cover Photo Award goes to Neos: six bemused

people sit in a section of an empty auditorium while four others head for the exit. Perhaps they are reacting to the cadenza composed by Stefan Heucke for his arrangement of Liszt's *Concerto pathétique*. A more anachronistic and bombastic insertion it would be hard to imagine. A pity, because it detracts from the revival of a work that deserves to be heard more often. The story of the Concerto's complicated gestation would take up the rest of this review. Suffice it to say that Heucke's 2008 score is but the latest attempt to make a convincing two-piano concerto from this one-movement work with its structural affinities to the B minor and *Dante* Sonatas.

After this Gothic drama, Bach's C major Concerto for two pianos, the only one of his 13 extant original concertos definitely conceived for the keyboard, comes as a lively discussion. The outer movements bowl along with more transparency and verve than Robert and Gaby Casadesus (Sony, 1967), and I was particularly struck by Andreas Grau and Götz Schumacher's handling of the poignant central *Adagio ovvero largo*, preferable to the over-extended view taken by the otherwise admirable Schnabels *père et fils* in 1936.

The Stravinskys *père et fils* recorded the Concerto for two solo pianos in 1938. Though the GrauSchumacher Duo adopt more deliberate tempi for the four movements, theirs is an engaging account, especially of the lilting second movement ('Notturmo' – *Adagietto*). **Jeremy Nicholas**

JS Bach • Mozart

'Adagios and Fugues'

JS Bach/Mozart Adagio and Fugue, K405/3 (after BWV878). Larghetto cantabile and Fugue, K405/5 (after BWV874). Prelude and Fugue, K405/4 (after BWV877) **JS Bach/Anonymous** Adagio and Fugue (after BWV849 – two versions). Adagio and Fugue (after BWV867). Adagio cantabile and Fugue (after BWV876) **Mozart** Adagio and Fugue, K546. Allegro, KAnh44, and Fugue, K426

Akademie für Alte Musik Berlin

Harmonia Mundi © HMC90 2159 (51' • DDD)



After settling in Vienna, heedless of his father's dire warning, Mozart took every

opportunity of impressing the sceptical Leopold with his seriousness of purpose. In April 1782 he informed him that 'Every Sunday at 12 o'clock I go to Baron van Swieten's, where nothing is played but Bach and Handel. I am currently making myself a collection of Bach fugues...' For the Baron's weekly Baroque matinees Mozart also transcribed assorted Bach fugues for strings, six for trio, five for quartet. His Bach enthusiasm may have been further spurred by his bride-to-be Constanze, who had become something of a fugaholic.

For his quartet arrangements, Mozart favoured the most austere archaic-sounding fugues from the '48'. When they appeared in print, they were prefaced, rather incongruously, by new preludes in an unknown hand – Bach filtered through a *galant* prism. The Akademie für Alte Musik complement three of the Mozart transcriptions with anonymous string quintet arrangements of other fugues from the '48', again fitted out with new preludes. Their playing is thoughtful and lucid, with telling use of dynamic shading (impossible on a harpsichord, of course), and precise sifting of the polyphonic strands. To offset the potential dourness in a succession of slow *stile antico* fugues,

the Akademie vary the instrumental colours: solo strings, string orchestra, and the starkly antique combination of oboes, trombones and bassoon.

Amid this rescored Bach by Mozart et al are finely rugged performances of the contorted, neo-Bachian fugue K426, in both its original version for two pianos and its later, more familiar, string arrangement, with the added prelude (K546). I specially enjoyed the chance to hear the fugue played on two fortepianos, with their buzzy, slightly abrasive resonance, prefaced here by a snatch of a frenetic C minor *Allegro* – one of several Baroque pastiches that Mozart abandoned as a fragment during his intensive Bach-Handel phase.

Richard Wigmore

Beethoven

Piano Concerto No 3, Op 37^a. Piano Sonatas – No 14, 'Moonlight', Op 27 No 2; No 32, Op 111

Fazil Say *pf*^a **Frankfurt Radio Symphony Orchestra / Gianandrea Noseda**

Naïve © V5347 (73' • DDD)



Fazil Say, a pianist with a maverick reputation, now takes Beethoven by storm

and the result, while unsettling for those who rejoice in more classic virtues, is challenging and arresting at many different levels. In the Third Concerto, his orchestra under Gianandrea Noseda are entirely in sympathy with their volatile soloist, and their stealthy start to the opening *tutti* and subsequent exhilarating sense of *con brio* tell you that this is going to be no ordinary performance. Say's first entry is boldly assertive and from then on he sweeps all before him with an assured virtuoso brilliance, a salty and invigorating alternative to more staid readings. His cadenza (it is surely by him, though the sleeve makes no mention of it) erupts in a blaze of fireworks before a curious, music-box end. The central *Largo*, though occasionally brusque, is never less than

musicianly and there are many spine-tingling moments in the finale.

The Op 111 Sonata (placed oddly before the *Moonlight*) could hardly open in a bolder, more declamatory style, with the odd bass reinforcement for good measure. Everything is propelled with a thrilling energy and momentum (though a sudden burst of speed in the *Pistesso tempo* will take you by surprise). Again, others may find a greater sense of transcendence in the second-movement variations yet Say's entirely personal view is burning and almost palpable. He is probing and reflective in the *Moonlight* Sonata's opening *Adagio*, perky rather than laborious (Arrau) in the *Allegretto* and unleashes an elemental force in the finale. This may be Beethoven with a difference but it is brilliantly urgent and committed. Say is boldly and resonantly recorded. **Bryce Morrison**

Bizet • Fauré • Gounod

Bizet L'Arlésienne - Suites Nos 1 & 2

Fauré Masques et Bergamasques, Op 112

Gounod Faust - Ballet Music

Suisse Romande Orchestra / Kazuki Yamada

Pentatone (P) (P) PTC5186 358 (70' • DDD/DSD)



Winner of the 2009 Besançon Competition, Kazuki Yamada was just 23

when he was appointed the first-ever Principal Guest Conductor of the Orchestre de la Suisse Romande. This is the first of three releases of dance repertoire he will record in Geneva for Pentatone Classics, whose admirable sound engineering certainly demonstrates to handsome effect the fabulous acoustic of Victoria Hall.

Yamada displays an interpretative nous, strength of personality and scrupulous attention to detail that are singularly impressive, and he draws some (for the most part) winningly alert and tastefully refined playing from the OSR (whose principal flute and harp cover themselves in glory). His reading of Fauré's adorable *Masques et Bergamasques* balances poise and spirit to consistently enchanting effect, the valedictory 'Pastorale' distilling a particularly affecting poignancy and rare grace. In both *L'Arlésienne* suites I still find it hard to set aside memories of Beecham's wholly magical accounts with the RPO from September 1956 but Yamada conducts with no little élan: the achingly wistful *Adagietto* from No 1 is really very touching, while No 2's 'Farandole' builds to a properly exhilarating finish (Ernest

Guiraud's ingenious and masterful combination of tunes pays off superbly here). In the Gounod *Faust* ballet music there's some momentarily dodgy brass tuning to contend with at the start of the No 2 *Adagio* but otherwise all goes swimmingly, and I for one eagerly await future offerings from this gifted, budding maestro. **Andrew Achenbach**

Britten • Weinberg

Britten Violin Concerto, Op 15

Weinberg Violin Concerto, Op 67

Linus Roth *vn* **Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin / Mihkel Kütson**

Challenge Classics (C) (P) CC72627 (63' • DDD/DSD)



Weinberg's Violin Concerto was composed in 1959, around the time

of Shostakovich's Cello Concerto No 1. Its sturdy, unrelenting first movement seems to have less elevated targets in its sights – something more like the instant gratification of Khachaturian's Concerto. But the momentarily chastened final pages set the tone for two exploratory inner movements that mull over some of the same ideas in calmer and ultimately rather touching spans, making the Shostakovich comparison more realistic. Driving momentum returns in the *Allegro risoluto* finale but here, too, the music finally subsides to a *pianissimo* conclusion that even in the most sympathetic hands can leave behind a slight impression of falling between two stools.

The Concerto drew extravagant praise from Shostakovich. Jens Laurson's booklet essay for the new Challenge Classics recording goes a stage further, claiming that it 'stands shoulder to shoulder...with anything...the [20th] century has to offer in the genre'. Be that as it may, it has certainly found a fine champion in the shape of Linus Roth. The German violinist presented his credentials in an impressive three-disc set of all Weinberg's violin and piano duos for Challenge Classics last year (9/13). But he is on even more commanding form here, surpassing Ilya Grubert's worthy account for Naxos and bearing comparison with Leonid Kogan's reference recording previously available on Olympia. Kogan and Kondrashin may be the more implacably driven but Roth and Mihkel Kütson find more subtlety and range of colour, and they are far better recorded, with no sign of the boxy acoustic that marred Roth's Weinberg sonatas.

Britten's Concerto is anything but a token filler. It too, has Shostakovichian affinities, though any similarities with the latter's Concerto No 1 – composed nearly a decade later and featuring another phantasmagoric *scherzo*, another passacaglia and another massively demanding cadenza – have to be coincidental. In fact the violin-writing owes much to the athleticism of Prokofiev's two violin concertos and to some extent also to the Berg Concerto.

Roth has stiff competition here but once again he sounds as though he has the music entirely in his fingers. That much cannot quite be said of Mark Lubotsky's pioneering account with the composer conducting. In fact the more pertinent comparison is with Vengerov, and while the Russian is peerlessly authoritative, there are plenty of phrases where Roth's approach is not just equally valid but even a touch more imaginative. In short, an outstanding disc. **David Fanning**

Britten – selected comparisons:

Lubotsky, ECO, Britten

(8/71⁸, 10/89) (DECC) 417 308-2LM

Vengerov, LSO, Rostropovich (7/03) (EMI) 557510-2

Weinberg – selected comparisons:

Kogan, Moscow PO, Kondrashin (1/98) (OLYM) OCD622

Grubert, Russian PO, Yablonsky (3/04) (NAXO) 8 557194

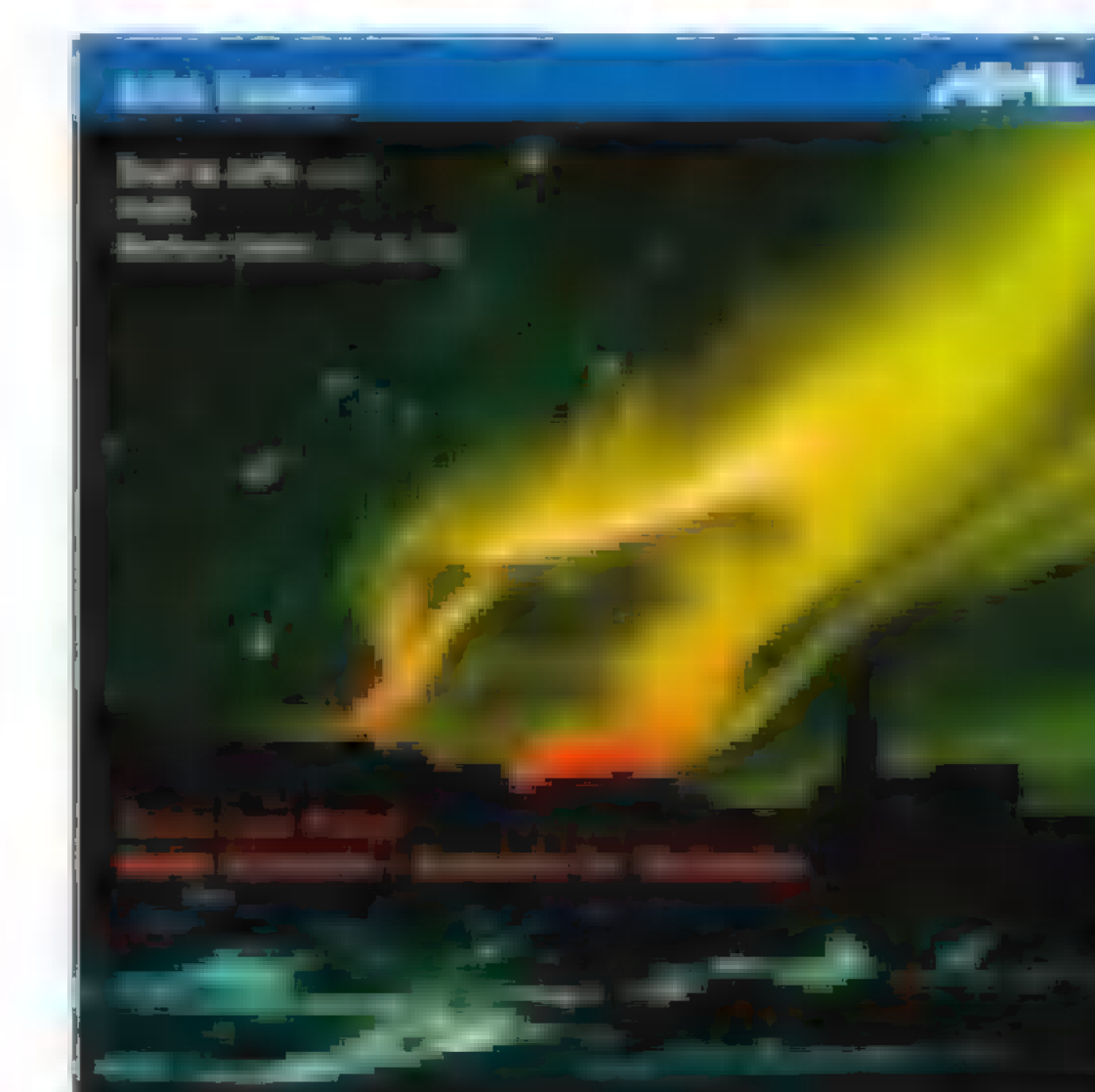
Casken

Violin Concerto^a. Concerto for Orchestra.

Orion over Farne

^aSophia Jaffé *vn* **Hallé Orchestra / Markus Stenz**

NMC (P) NMCD189 (75' • DDD)



For those unfamiliar with John Casken's music, he writes in a manifestly

21st-century style, incorporating elements of expressionism and lyrical atonality as well as free tonality, which are used in varying degrees piece by piece. His music is usually direct in appeal, with melodic writing not unlike Maw's, and repays repeated and focused listening.

Orion over Farne (1984) is probably the least unfamiliar of the three works here, following its revival at the Proms in 2009. There can be an angular and dissonant side to Casken's music (never taken to excess); and while *Orion* has this plentifully, its four movements are tempered by his innate lyricism and often beguiling orchestration. This latter aspect is prominent in the two concertos here, in the case of the Concerto for Orchestra (2007) leading him to reject the more abstract title, 'symphony'.

The music of the Violin Concerto (1995) is bound up with his second opera, *God's*

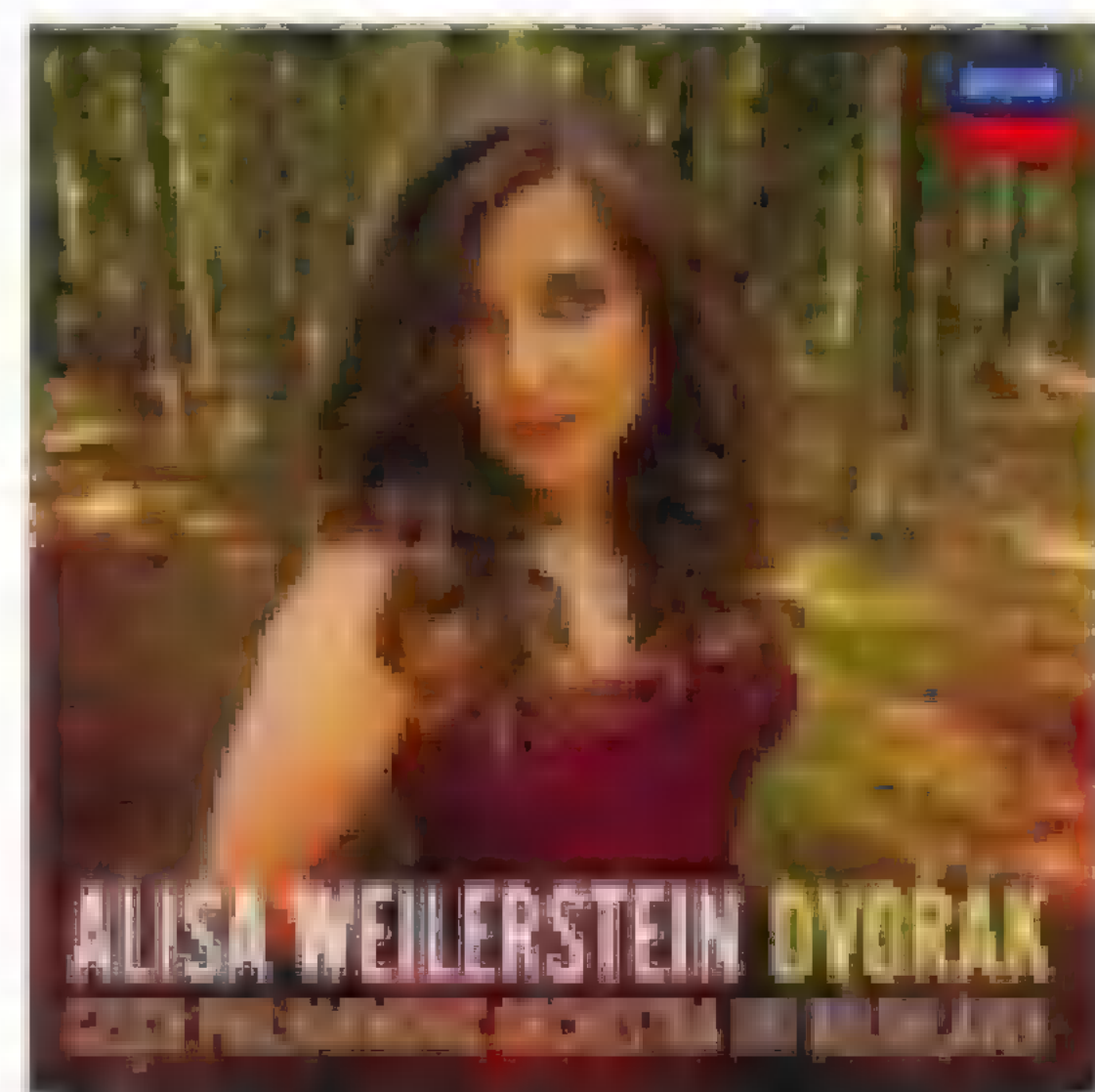
Liar, based on Tolstoy's novella *Father Sergius*. While the events of the story are reflected in the concerto's structure and expressive profile, this is not a symphonic poem (albeit with violin obbligato) in the way that *Orion over Farne* is. That said, there is no denying the music's immediacy of appeal and explicit lyricism, which Sophia Jaffé catches in her finely nuanced interpretation. Her feeling for line is strong and her intonation secure and not over-sweet. The Hallé accompany marvellously and Markus Stenz elicits equally fine playing in the other two works (not least some wonderful solo wind-playing in *Orion*). Excellent sound, as usual, from NMC. Strongly recommended. **Guy Rickards**

Dvořák

Cello Concerto, Op 104 B191^a. *Lasst mich allein*, Op 82 B157 No 1 (arr Lenehan)^b. Rondo, Op 94 B171^b. *Goin' Home* (Theme from Symphony No 9, arr Fisher/Lenehan)^b. *Songs my mother taught me*, Op 55 B104 No 4 (arr Grünfeld)^b. *Silent Woods*, Op 68 No 5 B173^b. *Slavonic Dance*, Op 46 B172 No 8^b

Alisa Weilerstein *vc*^b Anna Polonsky *pf*

^aCzech Philharmonic Orchestra / Jiří Bělohlávek
Decca © 478 5705DH (67' • DDD)



How disarmingly unforced and personable the Czech Philharmonic sound in the Concerto's introduction, Jiří Bělohlávek providing a quietly authoritative, glowingly affectionate launching pad for Alisa Weilerstein's superbly articulate entry. I recall her contribution on the Weilerstein Trio's delectable 2006 anthology for Koch containing Dvořák's Second and Fourth (*Dumky*) piano trios, and the present display confirms that she has a real feel for this repertoire. Not only does Weilerstein possess a flawless technical address, lustrous tone-production and intrepid range of dynamic, her playing evinces a captivating candour and risk-taking flair that not only succeed in activating the goosebumps (always a good sign) but also make you hear the music with fresh ears. For all the red-blooded temperament and freewheeling spontaneity on show, though, it's in the concerto's softer, frequently chamber-like passages that Weilerstein and those inimitably songful Czech winds really come into their own, the music's intimacy and sense of loss conveyed with the most raptly instinctive poetry imaginable. Just occasionally the prominent solo balance masks detail within the generous acoustic of Prague's Rudolfinum. No matter: among

the leading digital contenders, this conspicuously commanding and characterful new partnership must rank alongside Steven Isserlis's recent version.

I also greatly enjoyed the remaining items, which find Weilerstein striking up a tangibly communicative rapport with Anna Polonsky (whose quick-witted pianism is a constant pleasure). Both *Silent Woods* and the Rondo are essayed with genuine aplomb, whereas the slightly clunky arrangement of the vivacious G minor *Slavonic Dance* doesn't entirely come off. However, everything else here most certainly does, adding up to a disc worthy of the highest plaudits. **Andrew Achenbach**

Vc Conc – selected comparison:

Isserlis, Mabler CO, Harding (10/13) (HYPE) CDA67917

Elgar

Symphony No 2, Op 63

Staatskapelle Berlin / Daniel Barenboim

Decca © 478 6677DH (50' • DDD)



Daniel Barenboim first recorded Elgar's great E flat Symphony with the London

Philharmonic in 1972 and while the intervening four decades have confirmed certain characteristics in his interpretation, the differences between the two orchestras and their contrasting levels of familiarity with the music are significant. Broadly speaking, although there isn't much to choose between them tempo-wise, the earlier version is the more robust of the two, with a devil-may-care exuberance in the first movement and warmth to spare elsewhere. The Staatskapelle Berlin remake has less mud on its boots and more light and shade; it's also subtler (ie the transition into the first movement's aching second subject), and more mellow in tone. Barenboim has a wonderful way with soft string passages; at 3'02" into the *Larghetto*, for example, the second set, so rapturously beautiful, and the very close of the symphony where, in addition to nicely detailed winds and some expressively curling *portamentos*, there's a mass of helpfully clarified counterpoint. The *scherzo* is brilliantly played, though the ferocious central section sounded less muted, more unhinged in London (also try Sir Adrian Boult in 1977 on ICA). And there's the finale, the second subject from 1'25" (1'30" with the LPO), so much lighter than before, and with the theme winding its way through the orchestra almost nonchalantly, transparently too; but come the big climax (2'06"), where we're used to a hearty salute

from the trumpets, where are they? Hardly audible, I'm afraid.

As to reservations, here I realise I'm on very dangerous ground because I honestly feel that although, on the whole, the Staatskapelle do a wonderful job, they sound as if the music isn't quite in their blood (yet), whereas Sir Adrian secured a lump in the throat without even trying. As to digital rivals, I'd opt for Sir Andrew Davis, either with the Philharmonia or the BBC Symphony Orchestra. **Rob Cowan**

Selected comparisons:

LPO, Barenboim, r1972 (3/73^b) (SONY) SBK67176

BBC SO, A Davis (11/92^b, 7/03) (APEX) 0927 49586-2;
(1/06) (WARN) 2564 62199-2

Philb Orch, A Davis (8/10) (SIGN) SIGCD179

BBC SO, Boult, r1977 (12/13) (ICA) ICAC5106

Henze

Symphonies – No 2; No 10

Berlin Radio Symphony Orchestra /

Marek Janowski

Wergo © WER6725-2 (57' • DDD)



Wergo's cycle of Henze's symphonies is now done, and more complete than any

rival with its inclusion of the composer's final essay in the genre, the Tenth, which is accoutred with lots of the things that we used to think make a symphony – four movements, with an event-laden first, slow and string-led second, dancing third and grand, summatory finale – without working through, at any rate not yet to me, the more intrinsically 'symphonic' quality of a narrative with a necessary end-point. For all its percussively enriched glitter, Henze's later music demands we listen through some seriously opaque textures which may look more enticing on the page than they sound, and which Janowski and the Berlin RSO work hard to clarify while skirting the expressive compulsion that sets Henze so self-consciously within the German tradition and could be heard in the 2004 performances (I haven't heard Friedemann Layer's recording – Accord, 2/06) given by the Philadelphia Orchestra under Rattle, who commissioned what became the first movement and who may or may not be the latent subject of the Tenth (Henze remained cagey about this, dedicating the full work to Paul Sacher).

In fact Sacher is brought more readily to mind by the taut, three-movement Second Symphony (1949), written hot on the tail of similarly proportioned works by Honegger, Britten, Rachmaninov and others, and sharing with them a vivid sense of violent



Mikhail Pletnev conducts a 'genuinely absorbing' performance of Tchaikovsky's *Manfred* Symphony with the Russian National Orchestra (review on page 43)

response to external catastrophe. Janowski's recording is quicker and again acoustically clearer than the composer's own (with the Berlin Philharmonic) but, as with his recent Bruckner and Wagner cycles, the skilfully engineered pursuit and attainment of an objective viewpoint comes with its own price. From his earliest music onwards Henze's joy is palpable in telling real stories, not making meta-music, however anguished the idiom or subject-matter. Janowski offers more abstracted pleasures.

Peter Quantrill

Sym No 2 – comparative version:
BPO, Henze (12/05th) (BRIL) 9194

Hind

The City of Love^a. The Eye of Fire^b. Maya-Sesha^c

^aSarah Leonard *voc* ^aDavid Alberman *vn*

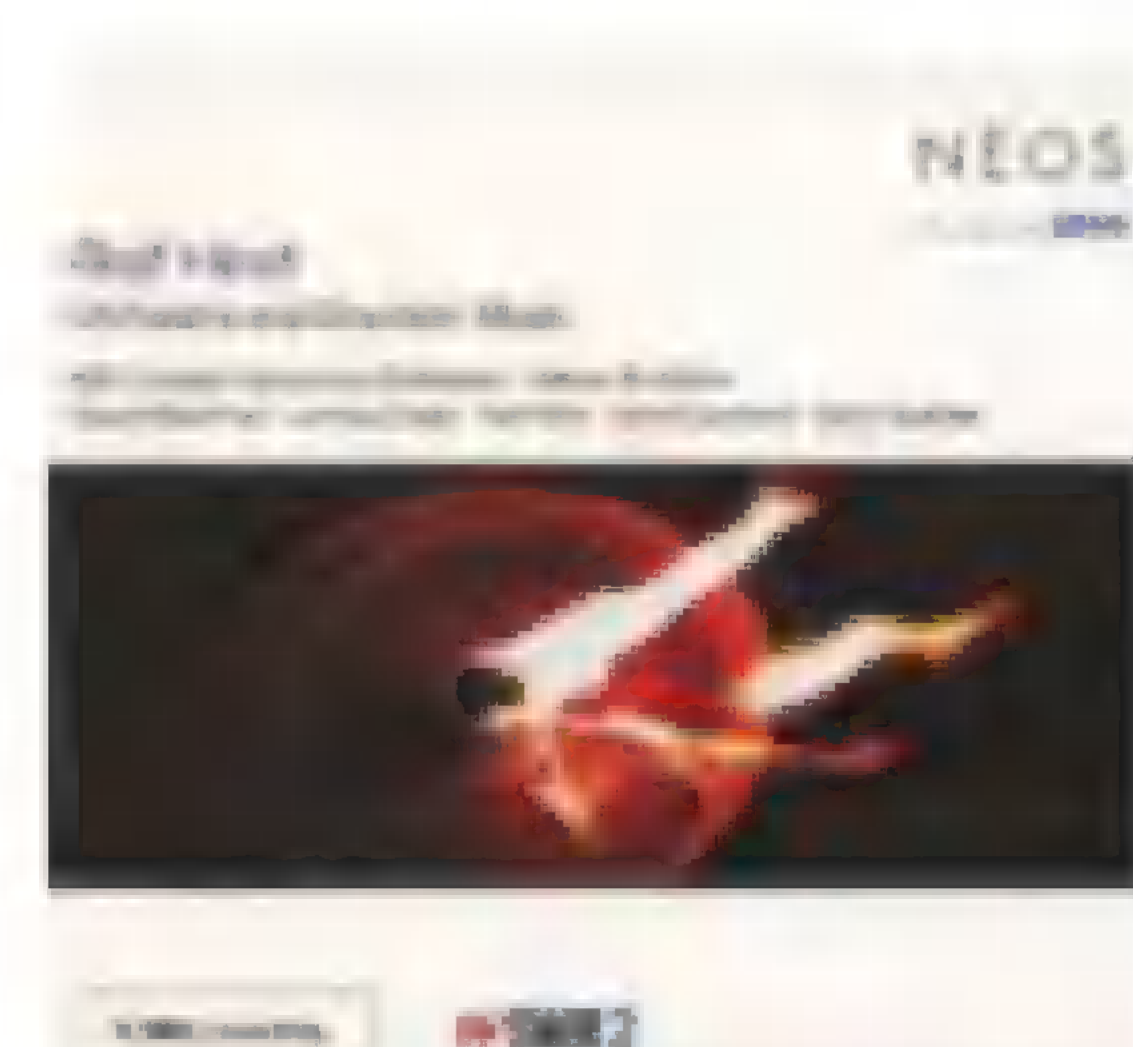
Rolf Hind ^{ac}*pf*/^b*prpf* ^cJames Crabb *acco*

^bDuke Quartet; ^cBBC Scottish Symphony

Orchestra / Martyn Brabbins

Neos © NEOS11049 (59' • DDD)

^aRecorded live



Rolf Hind's reputation as a pianist who ventures where others fear to tread is

no less evident in his own music, with its inspiration in such disparate sources as fractal geometry and yoga positions. The latter is central to *The Eye of Fire* (2004), a sequence of 14 sections grouped into three parts, in which piano and string quartet unfold a representation of these 'positions' whose relatively increasing difficulty mirrors the cumulative momentum of the music. Such fastidiousness of expression is to be heard on a larger scale in *Maya-Sesha* (2007), a piano concerto whose three movements comprise an intensifying processional, a central span with elements of the chaconne underpinning its resourceful depiction of Indian street life, then a final recession where the earlier activity is heard from a much more rarefied perspective.

Yet it is the earliest and shortest piece which also leaves the most lasting impression. *The City of Love* (2002) draws on brief texts from the 17th-century Hindi poet Bihari, its three songs setting the vocal line in a delicate but often animated context in which the violin acts as emotional intermediary between voice and piano. Music, moreover, that is tailor-made for the eloquent soprano of Sarah Leonard, though it is Hind's incisive and dextrous pianism that dominates this disc as a whole.

Unobtrusively fine sound (taken from three distinct sources) and succinct booklet-notes add to the appeal of a disc that further reinforces Hind's standing as a composer of no mean substance. **Richard Whitehouse**

Khachaturian • Shostakovich

Khachaturian Violin Concerto^a Shostakovich String Quartets^b – No 7, Op 108; No 8, Op 110

^aJames Ehnes *vn* ^bEhnes Quartet; ^aMelbourne Symphony Orchestra / Mark Wigglesworth
Onyx ® ONYX4121 (70' • DDD)



James Ehnes has released more than 30 discs since 2000, making a major mark

in significant swathes of the concerto repertoire including the Elgar, the two Bartóks and Prokofievs, the Tchaikovsky, Mendelssohn, Barber, Dvořák and the three Bruchs. There has been no Brahms as yet, no Beethoven, no Sibelius, no Shostakovich No 2, and it will be fascinating to hear what he has to say about those when and if the time comes, because his recorded legacy so far testifies to a remarkable, penetrating and communicative talent.

That talent is certainly manifest again here in Khachaturian's Concerto. The playing is lissom, spicy and lyrically luminous, complemented by the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra's lithe rhythms and seductive colouring under Mark Wigglesworth. The Khachaturian of *Spartacus* and *Gayaneh* surfaces in the throbbing climaxes of the slow central movement, but this is a performance that abides by musical perspective while bringing a terrific sense of character to Khachaturian's mix of exoticism and verve.

If Ehnes as soloist is no stranger to the catalogue, the Ehnes Quartet, formed as recently as 2010, here appears for the first time on disc in two of Shostakovich's string quartets. If these make slightly odd bedfellows with the open-hearted exuberance of the Khachaturian Concerto, the Ehnes Quartet has full measure of the music's essential intimacy and pensive atmosphere, bringing also a sharply defined virtuosity to the nervy counterpoint and jarring dissonance in the Seventh Quartet's finale and intense concentration coupled with arresting spontaneity to the narrative of the Eighth. **Geoffrey Norris**

Krauze

Fête galante et pastorale^a. Piano Concerto No 1^b. Suite de danses et de chansons^c. Violin Concerto^d

^aKonstanty Andrzej Kulka *vn* ^bZygmunt Krauze *pf*

^cElżbieta Chojnacka *hpd* ^aMusic Workshop;

^{ac}Polish Radio Symphony Orchestra /

^{ac}Jacek Rogala, ^bWojciech Michniewski; ^dWarsaw

Philharmonic Orchestra / Tadeusz Strugała

Dux © DUX0996 (75' • DDD)

Recorded ^d1980, ^a1995, ^b1998, ^c2000



Among the generation of Polish composers who came to prominence at

the turn of the 1970s, Zygmunt Krauze (b1938) has amassed an output of the greatest consistency – founded as it is on the concept of Unitary Music, in which the salient elements of a piece are present from its very start then evolve in a process of which that piece is potentially only a fragment. This is demonstrated in *Fête galante et pastorale* (1975), the eight layers of a music installation here combined as a fluid entity where the presence of folk instruments disrupts the classical sound world of the title, and in *Suite de danses et de chansons* (1977) with its interplay of Bulgarian rhythms and Baroque dances in a verse-and-response between the harpsichord and orchestra.

The other two pieces pursue a more abstract if hardly less arresting trajectory. The First Piano Concerto (1976) evolves incrementally as the soloist variously emerges and disappears within an orchestra of fastidious hues and timbres, while the Violin Concerto (1980) draws upon an expressive rhetoric that renders the traditional components of the genre (not least the initial orchestral *tutti*) from a provocative though never abstruse angle. Performances are as fine as expected given the involvement of such artists as Elżbieta Chojnacka and Konstanty Kulka, while the sound on these recordings (made between 1980 and 2000) has the textural clarity necessary to appreciate this music's arresting subtleties. Not easily available on first release, their wider dissemination should help to bring Krauze's music justifiably greater attention.

Richard Whitehouse

Marttinen

Violin Concerto, Op 13 MV63^a. Phantasy,

Op 154 MV84^b. Piano Concerto No 1,

'Concerto classico', Op 154 MV65^c

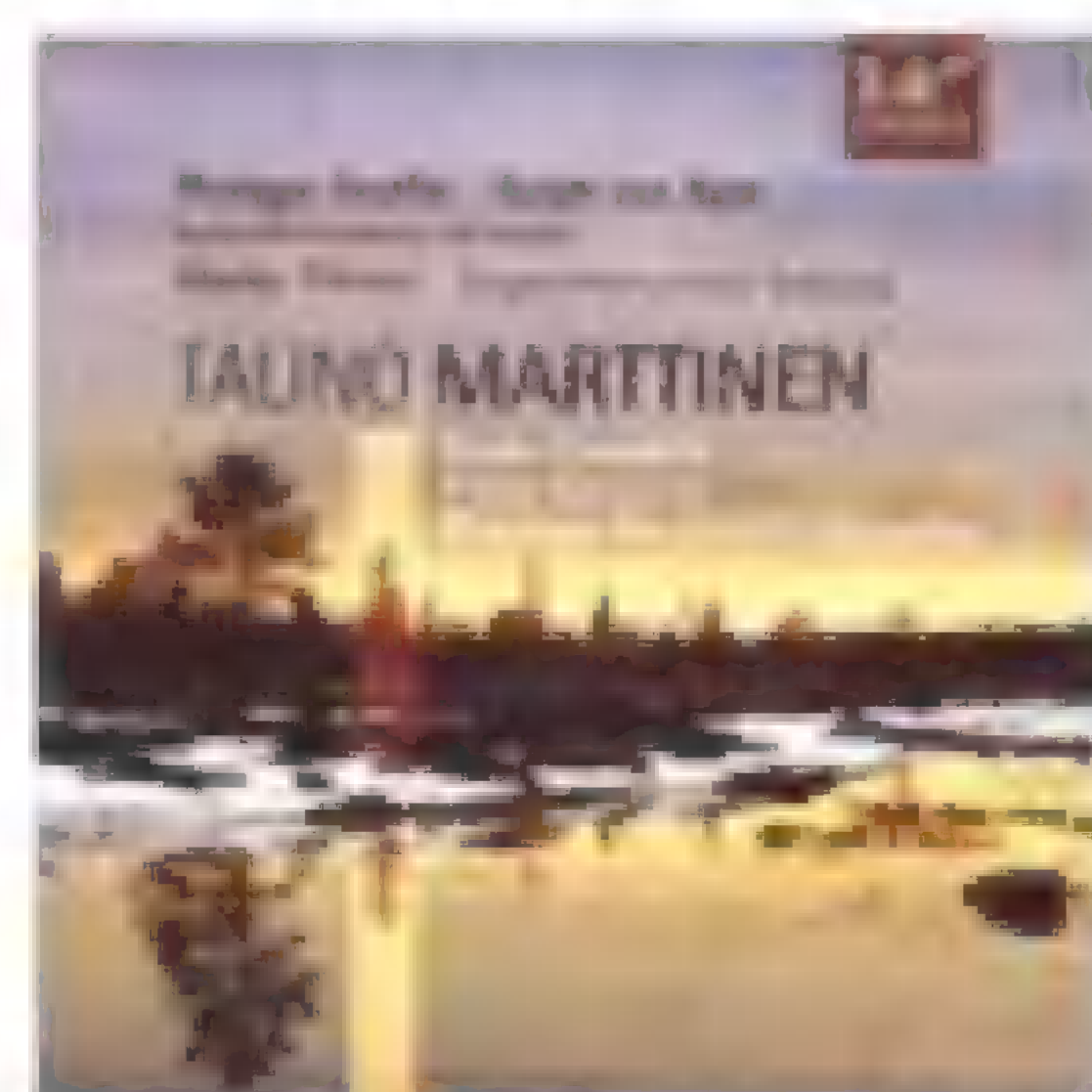
^aPhilippe Graffin *vn* ^bMarko Ylönen *vc*

^cRalph Van Raat *pf* ^{ac}Turku Philharmonic

Orchestra / Ari Rasilainen; ^bTampere

Philharmonic Orchestra / Hannu Lintu

Cobra © COBRA0041 (55' • DDD)



Tauno Marttinen (1912-2008) was born when Finland was still a Russian Imperial

Grand Duchy; he died two months short of his 96th birthday. He was prolific, with nine symphonies (BIS recorded two 20 years ago), a dozen concertos, 14 operas, a musical, six ballets and other orchestral, chamber and vocal works to his credit. Nothing if not a pluralist, Marttinen started out in light music and as a tango arranger, before adopting first Romanticism then (in the late 1950s) serialism. Contemporaneously with Rautavaara, he studied with Vogel in Switzerland and the beautifully lyrical Violin Concerto (1962) dates from this time, written as 'pure 12-tone music' (*sic*). The result sounds chromatic harmonically rather than dodecaphonic and Philippe Graffin finds its expressive heart with ease. More closely recorded than was Pekka Kauppinen by BIS, Graffin and Rasilainen in Turku are also slightly swifter overall, too, and with Cobra's more immediate sound are marginally the first choice.

Two years after the Violin Concerto, Marttinen penned the first of his four piano

concertos, as an early post-modernist reaction away from Schoenbergian expressionism. The trouble with this *Concerto classico* is that it sounds like cod-Rachmaninovian pastiche, regressing from the radical by diving headlong into old habits. Ralph van Raat does what he can, but modernism obviously drew the best from this composer. The darkly impressive *Phantasy* (begun the same year but completed only in 1978) lay undiscovered until after Marttinen's death. Stylistically, it lies between the two concertos and Marko Ylönen makes a fine case for it, despite his intonation being audibly taxed in the central *Adagio*, accompanied with finesse by Hannu Lintu and the Tampere Philharmonic Orchestra. This is a fascinating, entertaining release, well documented and worth investigating. Hopefully Cobra will go on to issue some of the symphonies. **Guy Rickards**

Vn Conc – comparative version:

Kauppinen, Lahti SO, Vänskä (BIS) BIS-CD701

Mozart

Piano Concertos – No 14, K449;

No 27, K595. Rondo, K382

Ingrid Jacoby *pf* Academy of St Martin

in the Fields / Sir Neville Marriner

ICA Classics © ICAC5125 (67' • DDD)



Ingrid Jacoby pairs two of Mozart's most delectable concertos on her new disc, which

is rounded out with the early D major Rondo. At her finest, she displays a wonderful clarity of fingerwork and she's particularly impressive in the irrepressible 6/8 coda that closes K449. However, Uchida and Perahia find even more glee in this movement and manage to be simultaneously immaculate and spontaneous-sounding. Although it's easy to understand the temptation to emphasise the *Andantino*'s sinuous lines with a slowish tempo, it does make life more difficult for the soloist, and one that Jacoby doesn't entirely overcome. Pires finds a perfect balance between expressiveness and momentum here, cushioned by Abbado's Vienna strings.

Marriner is an ever-attentive partner, coaxing much characterful playing from the ASMF, not least in the *Larghetto* of K595. But again Jacoby can't quite compete with the finest in terms of tone production and poetic phrasing. If Uchida is arguably too self-consciously beautiful here, an effect increased by Tate's highly reactive ECO, then Perahia, Brendel and Goode are all

effortlessly alluring, and Pires brings off that difficult trick of shaping each phrase lovingly without ever sounding mannered or self-indulgent. Jacoby's finale is very crisp but just a little po-faced: she lacks the ease of Perahia and the deliciously skipping quality that Goode conveys. A similar earnestness informs Jacoby's approach to the variation-form Rondo – alongside which Perahia is wonderfully relaxed. The recorded quality is pleasingly natural and the booklet features a class act from Richard Wigmore. **Harriet Smith**

Pf Concs – selected comparisons:

Perahia, ECO (5/80th, 9/87th) (SONY) 82876 87230-2

Uchida, ECO, Tate

(11/88th, 1/89th, 5/06) (PHIL) 475 7306PB8

K449 – selected comparisons:

Moravec, Czech CO, Vlach (9/77th) (SUPR) SU3809-2

Pires, VPO, Abbado (3/94) (DG) 437 529-2GH,

477 5747GMO or 479 1435GM2

K595 – selected comparisons:

Goode, Orpheus CO (A/00) (NONE) 7559 79608-2

Brendel, SCO, Mackerras (6/01) (PHIL) 468 367-2PH

Pires, Orch Mozart, Abbado (1/13) (DG) 479 0075GH

Rondo, K382 – selected comparisons:

Perahia, ECO (4/84th) (SONY) 88691 91411-2

Mozart

Piano Concertos – No 18, K456; No 22, K482

Ronald Brautigam *fp*

Cologne Academy / Michael Alexander Willens

BIS ③ BIS2044 (60' • DDD/DSD)



In a letter to his daughter Nannerl, Leopold Mozart expressed his

pleasure at the interplay of the various instruments after hearing Wolfgang perform the B flat Concerto, K456. I experienced comparable delight listening to this beautifully recorded performance from Ronald Brautigam and the responsive Cologne period band. In a Mozartian opera reimaged in instrumental terms, fortepiano, wind and strings conspire and banter with captivating grace and legerdemain.

Likewise using a modern copy of an Anton Walter fortepiano, Brautigam favours rather fleeter tempi, and a more direct style of phrasing, than Robert Levin on his fine L'Oiseau Lyre recording with Christopher Hogwood (11/96 – nla). In the first movement, with its suggestion of a march for toy soldiers, Levin is more reflective, Brautigam more playfully extrovert, stressing continuity of line above rhythmic and tonal nuance. I prefer Brautigam's more flowing manner in the G minor *Andante*, where Levin's minute

inflections can sound over-exquisite. The period woodwind, led by the virginal solo flute, are especially delectable in the serenading G major variation. As to the 'hunting' finale, you'd go far to hear a performance of such darting wit and panache, or one that exudes such a sense of delighted collusion between woodwind – each one an operatic character in itself – and the fortepiano's sweet, silvery treble.

In the more opulently scored K482 (trumpets and drums, oboes replaced by clarinets) I ideally wanted a fuller string tone than the 14 Cologne players can muster. That said, the performance is scarcely less enjoyable than that of K456, not least in the C minor *Andante*, which at Brautigam's unusually mobile tempo is just as touching, and (in the confrontational second variation) more dramatic, than in more gravely paced readings. Brautigam generates an exhilarating forward sweep in the regal opening movement – Levin (9/98 – nla) is more inclined to linger over detail – and an infectious sense of fun in the finale, where swiftness never compromises immaculate clarity of articulation. His own cadenzas are short and to the point. Levin's are longer, cleverer and more consciously showy. Again, some may find Brautigam too swift in the finale's sensuous *Così fan tutte*-ish interlude, with its ravishing clarinet sonorities. For me the easily flowing pace and delicate touches of embellishment, predictably less lavish than Levin's, mesh perfectly with the animated naturalness of the whole performance.

Richard Wigmore

Mussorgsky • Ravel

Mussorgsky *Pictures at an Exhibition*

(orch Ravel) **Ravel** *Ma Mère l'Oye – Suite*


Anima Eterna, Bruges / Jos van Immerseel


Zig-Zag Territoires ③ ZZT343 (49' • DDD)



As in Anima Eterna's previous releases, it is the woodwind and brass that immediately


make a distinctive, mellow impact on this coupling of Ravel's *Ma Mère l'Oye* Suite with his orchestral realisation of Mussorgsky's *Pictures from an Exhibition*, rendered here in the inexact but seemingly ineradicable translation as *Pictures at an Exhibition*. Anima Eterna, using instruments of the period, pride themselves on their purity of sound, style and expression. If the wind instruments are the first things to catch the ear, the overall balance, blend and breath of fresh air that Jos van Immerseel brings to his





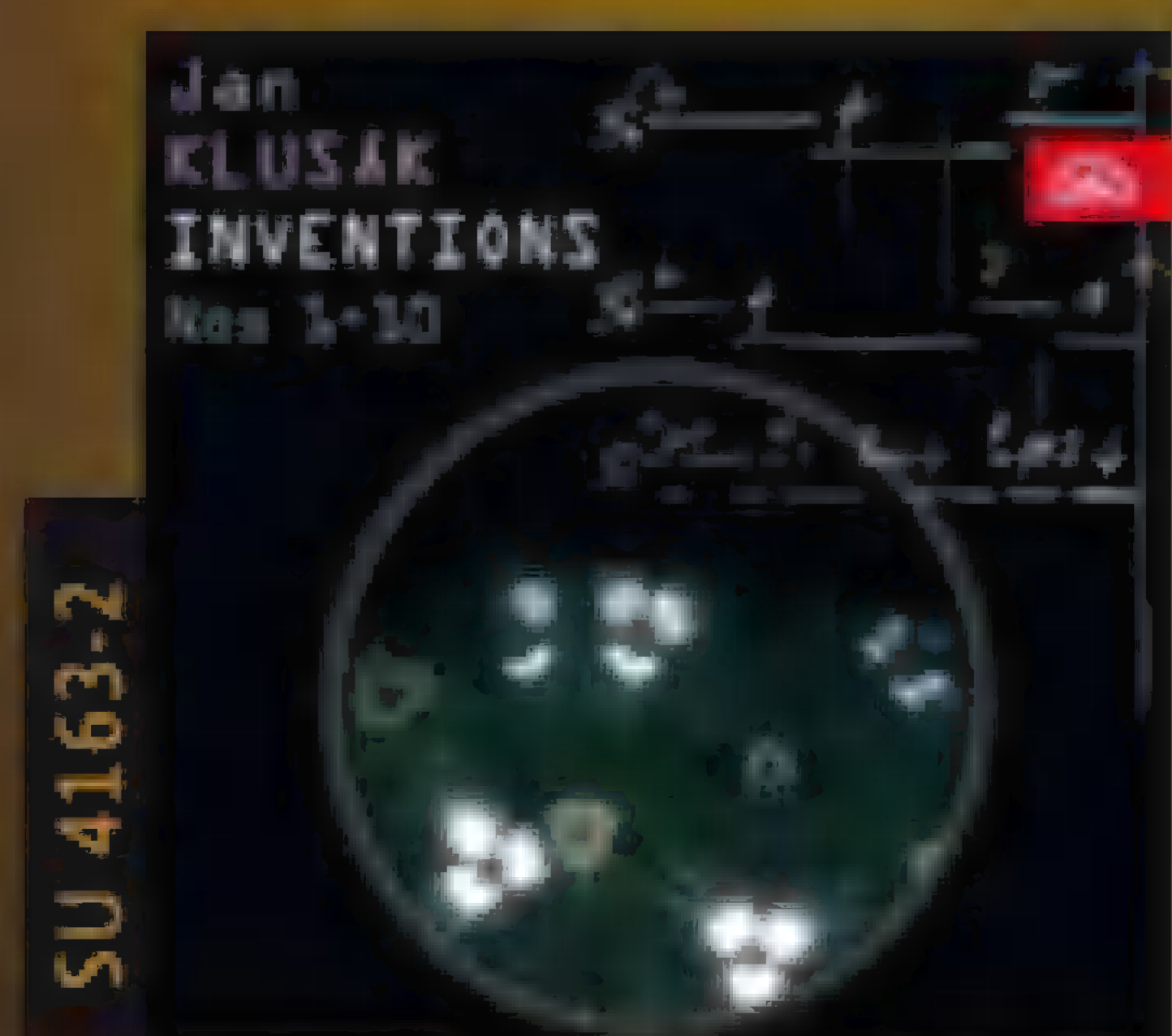
SU 4148-2

Veronika Böhmová
Piano Works
Stravinsky / Prokofiev




SU 4161-2

Vivat Tango – Piazzolla / Bragato / Galliano
Ladislav Horák – accordion
Petr Nouzovský – cello




SU 4163-2

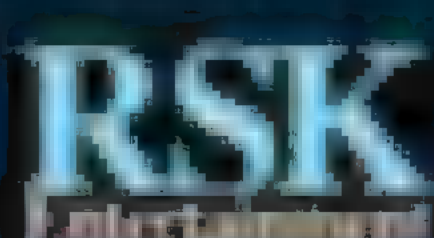
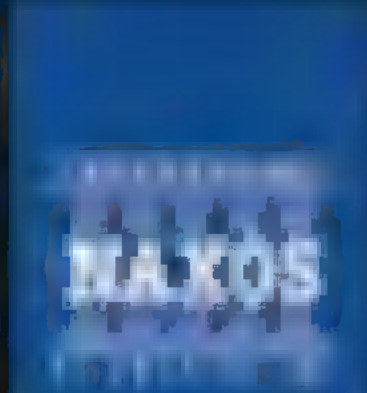

Jan Klusák – Inventions
PKF – Prague Philharmonia,
Prague Radio Symphony Orchestra etc.



SU 4171-2

Dagmar Pecková – Dreams
Mahler / Wagner / Berio / Brahms
PKF – Prague Philharmonia, Jiří Bělohlávek

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interpretations just as compellingly lend the performances lucidity, polish and individuality. The spectrum of colour is scintillating in 'Laideronette, Impératrice des pagodes', and the entire suite is marked by suavity, eloquent instrumental detail and a Gallic finesse.

Moreover, the characterisation in the Ravel/Mussorgsky *Pictures* is well-formed and animated. The glare of modern orchestral sonority that can sometimes give too glinting an edge to Ravel's scoring is eliminated here by dint of the instruments deployed (a warm but still piquant saxophone in 'Il vecchio castello', for instance). The orchestra can capture and convey the imagery of the cumbersome 'Bydło' just as convincingly as it does the twittering of the 'Tuileries' and the chattering of the unhatched chicks. Even those who prefer Mussorgsky's original piano version might be swayed by Anima Eterna's subtlety and mix of graphic discretion and immediacy. **Geoffrey Norris**

O'Connell

Four Orchestral Pieces. North. Symphony
RTÉ National Symphony Orchestra /
Gavin Maloney
RTÉ Lyric FM © CD144 (78' • DDD)



Kevin O'Connell (b1958) is a Northern Irish composer, resident since 1997

in Dublin. The three orchestral works gathered here date from after his arrival in the Republic, though the first, *North* (1997-98), was commissioned by BBC Radio 3. An orchestral diptych, its title relates to Seamus Heaney's fourth volume of poems (1975; the first Heaney published after also moving from Ulster to Dublin). O'Connell rejects any programmatic origin but there is disguised reference to Sibelius's Fourth Symphony at the opening span's outset. The work proceeds in a most un-Sibelian manner, the succeeding *scherzo*-like finale evolving Schoenbergian, even Weberian textures rather (listen from 3'00").

North does not close so much as fizzle out. The *Four Orchestral Pieces* (2003-06) are not dissimilar in this regard; musical events occur but their developments – sometimes violent, as there is a jagged, rough-hewn side to O'Connell's melodies and orchestration – are too static and unconvincing. The second, 'Sláttar', takes its cue from Grieg's Op 72 *Norwegian Peasant Dances* but sounds more like Leifs on a bad day. The others all seem equally

rooted to the spot; at almost 30 minutes long (overlong) the result is enervating.

In the booklet, O'Connell relates that 'an Irish critic told me candidly that [the *Four Pieces*] should have been a symphony' but – equally candidly – the music exhibits none of the necessary motivic/thematic growth or 'large-scale integration of contrasts' to qualify. The Symphony O'Connell did compose (2007-10) starts promisingly though its four movements show him grappling with a form he found 'daunting'. Ultimately, the Symphony, despite many interesting and attractive passages, fails to gel. The RTÉ National Symphony Orchestra under Gavin Maloney play with commitment and Anton Timoney's sound is bright – if a touch studio-bound – but the disc remains a frustrating experience to hear. **Guy Rickards**

Panufnik

Bassoon Concerto^a.

Symphony No 9, 'Sinfonia di speranza'

^aRobert Thompson *bn*

BBC Symphony Orchestra / Andrzej Panufnik

Heritage © HTGCD266 (67' • DDD)

Recorded 1987



Marking the centenary of Sir Andrzej Panufnik's birth, these recordings, originally

made by the BBC in 1987, offer a double insight into the composer. We have his own interpretations of two key works, each preceded by his spoken commentary. Both works were inspired by contemporary events – events which are rapidly becoming obscured by the mists of time – so it is good to experience directly his very personal response to what was happening back in the homeland he had left in 1954.

The recordings certainly show their age but while the sound is often shallow and hard-edged, the profound intensity of the music-making shines through with great potency. That is particularly evident in the Bassoon Concerto. Just as he started work on the Concerto, Panufnik heard of the torture and murder of the priest Father Jerzy Popiełuszko and decided to dedicate it to his memory. With its humorous connotations, it might seem risky to use the bassoon as a vehicle to express profound grief but such is the power of Panufnik's writing that what, in other hands, might sound clownish here evokes almost vocal utterances of pain and sorrow. Thompson clearly understands the emotional significance of the work and, supported by alert and incisive playing from the

BBC SO, gives a performance of compelling intensity.

The Ninth Symphony, *Sinfonia di Speranza*, was composed immediately after the Bassoon Concerto and Panufnik describes it as the concerto's 'direct musical and spiritual sequel'. But he also refers to the rainbow as the work's 'guiding symbol', and one thing missing from this performance is colour. We have the detail in black-and-white, as it were, but for all the intensity of his direction, the composer's vision is significantly undermined by this unsympathetic BBC studio recording. **Marc Rochester**

Schumann

Symphonies – No 1, 'Spring', Op 38; No 2, Op 61;
No 3, 'Rhenish', Op 97; D minor (1841)

Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra / Sir Simon Rattle

Berliner Philharmoniker Recordings

Ⓟ Ⓢ (2 + 2) BPHR140011 (125' 140' + 35' • DDD • 16:9 • 1080i • DTS-HD MA5.0 & PCM stereo • O)

Recorded live at the Berlin Philharmonie, February & November 2013

Blu-ray includes the symphonies plus Sir Simon Rattle in conversation; Behind the scenes of the recording; About the Digital Concert Hall



Lucky old Schumann. Proving a point I made some time ago – that Schumann is truly a

musician's composer – Sir Simon Rattle now presents his thoughts on the symphonies, adding his name to a list that grows ever more distinguished: Luisi, Paavo Järvi, Dausgaard, Holliger and Nézet-Séguin have all issued or instigated recent cycles and the fruits of Robin Ticciati's Glasgow performances are due out imminently from Linn. A musician's composer, because his music often seems to excite conductors more than it does audiences. I well remember in a previous life sitting in marketing meetings staring at concert listings containing a Schumann symphony with an artistic director bearing down and begging someone – anyone – to find a way to attract a paying crowd to it.

That all seems to be changing gradually, although far too gradually, and too late of course for poor Schumann himself. In the vanguard of those who would pooh-pooh lazy notions of a flawed composer unversed in orchestration are the directors of smaller orchestras playing either period or modern instruments, homing in on the structural ingenuity and tensile strength of these four works, adopting fleeter tempi than hitherto and exploiting the athletic opportunities offered by today's crop of virtuoso chamber

orchestras. The result might have been christened 'Schumann-lite' in recent issues of *Gramophone* but that's 'lite' as in texture, not 'light' as in cosmetic and unadventurous.

Unadventurous is not a charge anyone could ever level at Rattle. Always with a keen ear (not to mention baton) cocked towards the period-practice movement even as he has fronted two of the great symphonic behemoths of our time, it has been his gift to persuade those Romantic institutions to follow him on his explorations not only into repertoires outside those frequented by his predecessors but also into styles and techniques that can open new vistas on the music that forms the core of their being.

Thus Rattle makes no apology for Schumann's orchestration, finding the myriad colours with which the composer imbued his music. Neither is there a hint of routine in the playing: the richness of the Berlin strings and beauty of the woodwind go without saying. There's the expected virtuosity, too, in places such as the *Scherzo* of the Second. This, though, one cannot help but feel, is the muscularity of a thoroughbred rather than the litheness of a dancer: compare the Chamber Orchestra of Europe in Paris with Nézet-Séguin, who

whirl through this music seemingly without a care (and without Rattle's contrived holdings-back in the second Trio).

That's an underlying theme here. Rattle's tempi are broader in all the symphonies except the *Rhenish*, where he finds a sinewy robustness and even a grandeur that are not in Nézet-Séguin's conception. The other aspect less apparent in these performances is spontaneity: whereas the COE readings spring virtually fully formed to life, with their subtle gradations of tempo growing organically from the thrust of the music, the Berlin traversals are perhaps somewhat more studied. There's nothing *poco a poco* about the *accelerando* towards the end of the *Spring* Symphony, for example, or particularly natural about the *ritards* as the *Scherzo* of the D minor Symphony melts into the finale or as fig V in the finale is approached (about a minute in).

That D minor Symphony is the original (1841) version of what became the Fourth a decade later, an increasingly popular choice (and Brahms's preference). However, the first movement never seems to settle into its pulse and proves an oddly unsatisfactory experience. What is more than satisfactory throughout, though, is the sound of the recording – preserving the warmth and

sustain of the BPO as the music bounces off the walls of the Philharmonie. Timpani are an especially notable presence throughout, clouding the opening of the *Spring*, for example, although perhaps the faders might have been pushed up a notch for the violin solos in the D minor (as they sound as if they have been for the brass fanfares near the end of the *Rhenish*).

Talking of satisfaction, the set comes in a linen-bound book, generously annotated in two languages and decorated with pictures of specially commissioned vases. A Blu-ray disc preserves the live performances in vision (and five-channel surround sound), and there is not only a download code to access high-resolution masters of the recordings but also a seven-day ticket for the BPO's much-acclaimed Digital Concert Hall. The package as a whole launches the orchestra's in-house label in sumptuous style and deserves to do well – admirers of the Philharmonic and/or Rattle will need no persuading. For me, though, the COE with Nézet-Séguin just edges the BPO and Rattle for a digital Schumann cycle – albeit with the revised Fourth – with its infectious impulsiveness and *joie de vivre*.

David Threasher

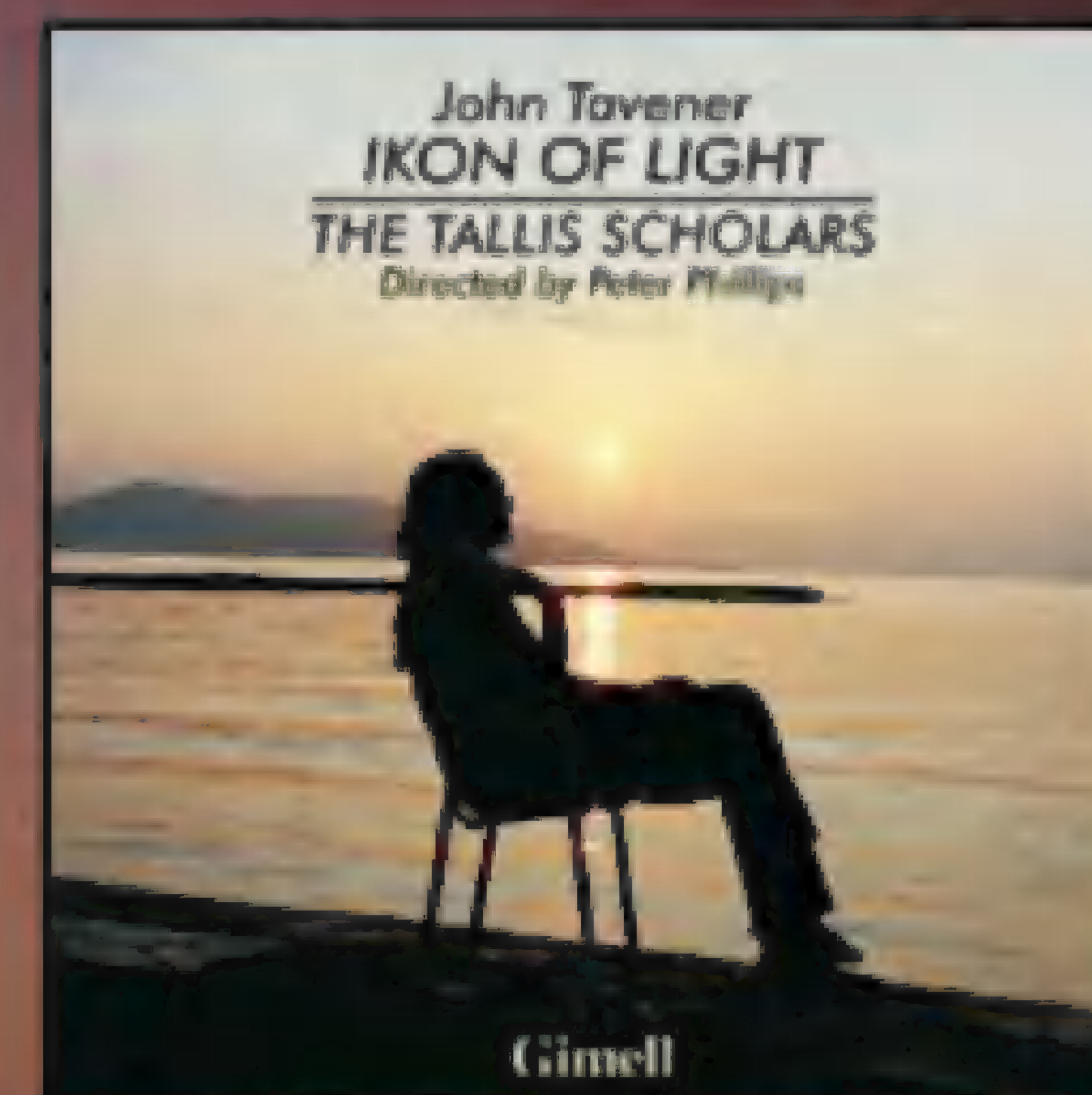
Selected comparison:

COE, Nézet-Séguin (5/14) (DG) 479 2437GH

'Tavener's supremely effective, luminous musical ritual, stunningly performed by The Tallis Scholars'

Andrew McGregor, *BBC Music Magazine*

The Tallis Scholars will perform *Ikon of Light* and the world premiere of Sir John Tavener's *Requiem Fragments* at the BBC Proms on 4 August, the exact anniversary of the outbreak of World War One



GIMSE 404 Budget Price Total playing time: 77.32
Recorded in 1984 and 1982*

Sir John Tavener (1944–2013)

Ikon of Light

with members of the Chilingirian String Quartet

Funeral Ikos

The Lamb conducted by the composer

Great Canon of St Andrew of Crete *

'Some of the most profoundly beautiful music I know' Marc Rochester, Re-issue of the Month, *Gramophone* May 2014

'A CD of miracles, and miraculous sounds' Stuart Millson, *The Quarterly Review*

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Shostakovich

Symphonies – No 1, Op 10^a; No 15, Op 141

Netherlands Radio Philharmonic Orchestra /
Mark Wigglesworth

BIS Ⓢ BIS1643 (79' • DDD/DSD)

From ^aBIS-SACD1603 (9/12)



Mark Wigglesworth has an excellent nose for this music.

His cycle of the symphonies – split between Wales and the Netherlands – has thrown up some top contenders and even first choices, and this recoupling of the first and last of them conveys a satisfying sense of both the journey and its completion. Shostakovich's beginnings in providing piano accompaniments for silent movies are much in evidence in the First Symphony. Wigglesworth's BIS engineers have even given the piano a refreshing immediacy as the storyboard of the opening movement unfolds.

Everything from slapstick to melodrama is embraced and vividly chronicled in Wigglesworth's performance. There are intimations, too, of Stravinsky's *Petrushka* (that obbligato piano again) and the *Ballerina* is much in evidence in the little flute melody that passes for a second subject. And to say that there is more than a touch of *Tom and Jerry* in the helter-skelter *scherzo* is to pretty much state the obvious. I love Wigglesworth's characterful handling of the passage coming out of the Trio where a grumpy bassoon laboriously tries to get the movement up to speed again. The intrigue, the thematic sleight of hand, the dazzling accomplishment of this piece never fails to amaze (the composer was 18) – but this Wigglesworth performance, with cracking playing from the Netherlands Radio Philharmonic Orchestra, must be one of the best.

The slow movement turns the tomfoolery and melodrama on its head and glimpses the soul of a teenager who is already experiencing anger and disillusionment. Wigglesworth digs deep here and his attention to dynamics has us breathing a different kind of air at the heart of the movement. The intimations of mortality which haunt the Fifteenth and last symphony are much less than a lifetime away.

Just as Shostakovich said he felt as though he had been born again at the premiere of the First Symphony, so the opening of the Fifteenth takes us back to the nursery, to a second or even third childhood. The flippancy and childishness

so well pointed by Wigglesworth (the silliness prompting that *William Tell* quote) is, of course, just the sort of irreverence the Soviets would have despised. Wigglesworth's performance has a perverse logic to it and he's so good at making a kind of sense of those passages that drift into the no-man's-land of the composer's imagination – like that strange meandering string fugue at the heart of the first movement.

The irony is, of course, writ large here; and, quite apart from the big rhetorical gestures that Wigglesworth's orchestra and engineers deliver with such force, there is a quiet wryness in moments like the flippant redirection of the *Tristan* quotation away from the indeterminacy of Wagner's famous chord. This piece knows exactly where it is going: towards the ticking percussion motif from his once outlawed Fourth Symphony. It's a last laugh that is not lost on Wigglesworth. **Edward Seckerson**

R Strauss

Don Juan, Op 20^a.

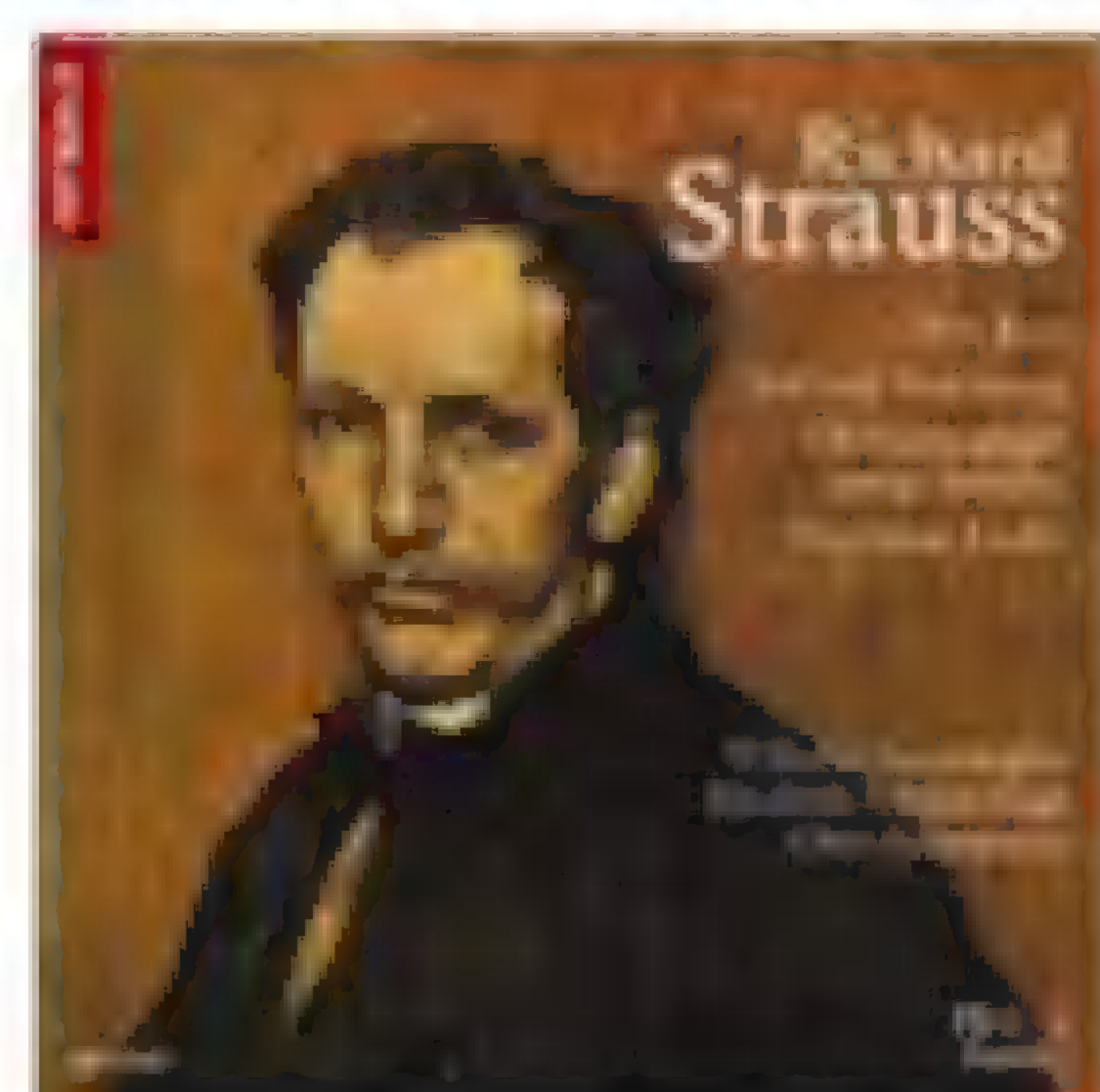
Till Eulenspiegels lustige Streiche, Op 28^a.

Tod und Verklärung, Op 24^b.

Vier letzte Lieder^c

^cElisabeth Schwarzkopf sop ^cPhilharmonia Orchestra / Otto Ackermann; ^{ab}Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra / Wilhelm Furtwängler
Praga Digitals Ⓢ PRD/DSD350 100
(79' • DDD/DSD)

Recorded ^b1950, ^c1953, ^a1954



Hot on the heels of Manfred Honeck's splendid collection of the same three key

tone-poems of Richard Strauss (Reference Recordings, 3/14), this Praga reissue, recorded in the Vienna Musikvereinsaal (tone-poems) and Watford Town Hall (*Four Last Songs*), has been splendidly remastered for SACD reproduction by Karel Soukenik. The sound is remarkably full-bodied and spacious.

The upper range of the massed violins in the opening *Don Juan* is full of passion. Furtwängler could transform the sound of an orchestra simply by standing in front of the players and holding them in his spell. The inner detail of woodwind and brass also has a magical glow about it, and the lovely oboe reprise of the main theme a touching tenderness. The reprise has tremendous momentum, swinging off exuberantly, and again thrillingly crowned by the triumphant horns and strings.

In *Tod und Verklärung* Furtwängler builds a tremendous, irresistible climax for

the work's closing pages, from which the great transformation chorale emerges exultantly on the brass to dominate the music's apotheosis, interrupted by a brief, final struggle for life before the radiantly celestial feeling of redemption closes the finest performance of Strauss's masterpiece on record.

Furtwängler's delightfully vivid *Till Eulenspiegel* then opens in high spirits, a Pulcinella-like character, unashamedly merry but never malignant. The playing of the Vienna Philharmonic is marvellously detailed (again helped by a remarkably transparent recording which also has a glowing bloom). The thunderous timpani and lower brass come dramatically into their own when Till is sentenced and his spirit floats away, yet still mischievously having the last word.

Extraordinarily, Praga has then included Strauss's *Four Last Songs*, sung so memorably by Elisabeth Schwarzkopf, in her famous 1953 recording with Otto Ackermann and the Philharmonia Orchestra. This has dominated the catalogue for six decades but sounds wonderfully fresh in this splendid remastered version. Schwarzkopf has a modern competitor in Dorothea Röschmann in partnership with the Rotterdam Philharmonic Orchestra. In the unforgettable final song, 'Im Abendrot', the two performances are equally moving, but Schwarzkopf's account makes a splendid bonus for this fine CD.

Ivan March

Vier letzte Lieder – selected comparison:

Röschmann, Rotterdam PO, Nézet-Séguin

(A/11) (BIS) BIS-SACD1880

R Strauss

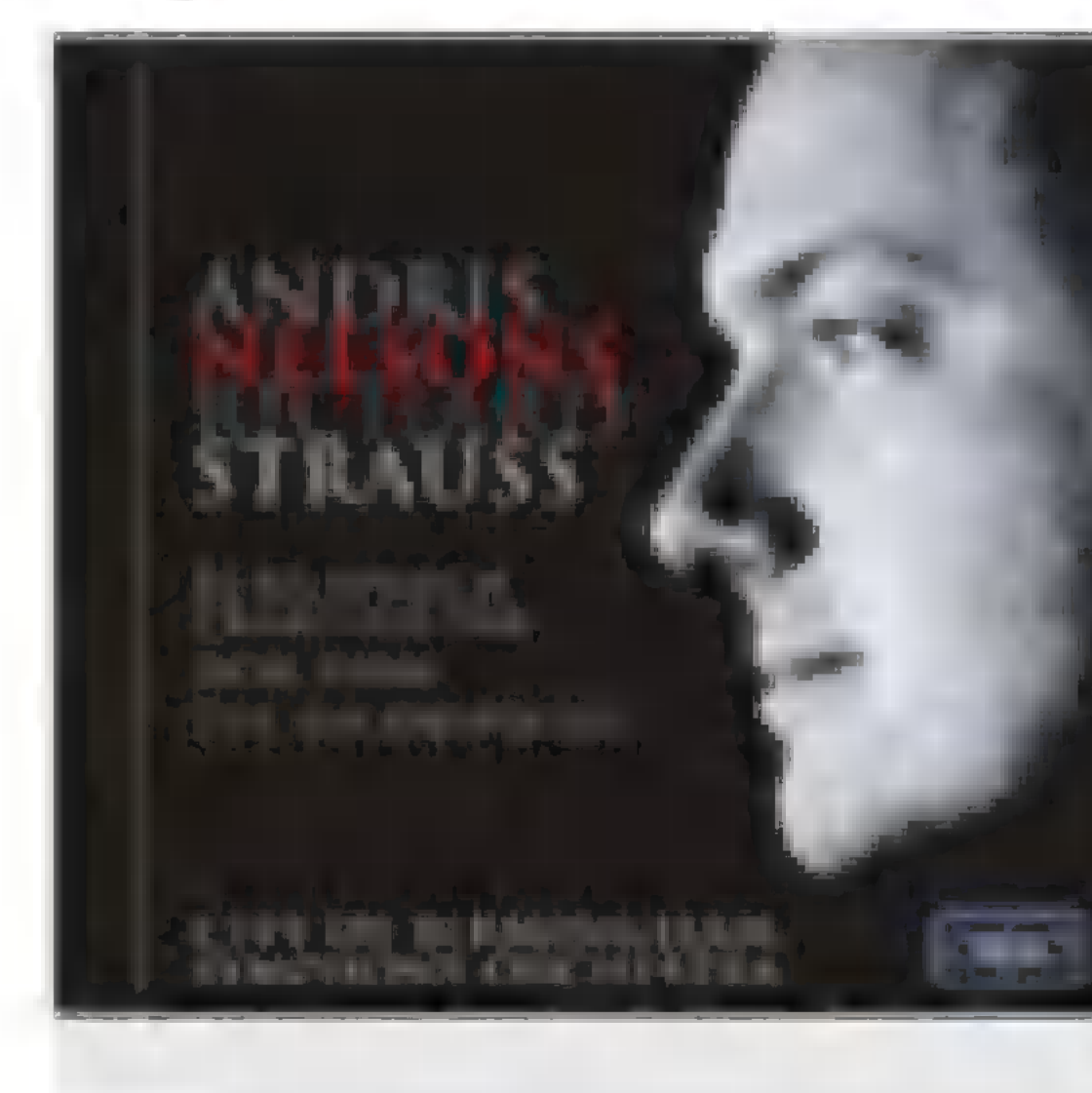
Also sprach Zarathustra, Op 30. Don Juan, Op 20. Till Eulenspiegels lustige Streiche, Op 28

City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra /

Andris Nelsons

Orfeo Ⓢ C878 141A (66' • DDD)

Recorded live at Symphony Hall, Birmingham, September 2011, January 2012 and January 2013



Andris Nelsons holds the sustained double low C that opens *Also sprach Zarathustra* with

its full measure of menace and the 'Sunrise' itself explodes to a volley of decibels: there are plenty of fine *Zarathustras* around (Karajan's last DG version still holding its own, despite a plethora of significant competition) but I suspect that for many the sheer weight and impact of this newcomer will be enough to sway the

balance in its favour. There aren't many works where depth of recorded sound contributes as much to the appeal of a work as the performance it reproduces but for me this is one such case. Nelsons surveys *Zarathustra's* varying chapters with impressive insight, the wailing of the 'Song of the Grave', with its weeping violin solo and downwardly spiralling accompaniment, doleful but vivid. The huge build-up of the twin sixth and seventh movements, which climaxes in a thunderous reprise of the opening chord, could hardly be more exciting, nor the terror-stricken chiming of the midnight bell at the close of 'The Dance Song'. Anyone who has been collecting Nelson's CBSO Strauss series won't be disappointed, while those who haven't are advised to sample.

The couplings are equally engaging. I would have preferred a little more woodwind detail around the very start of *Don Juan* but the romantic second subject (2'28"), taken very broadly, is beautifully played, burning to a superb climax. Nelsons's *Till Eulenspiegel* frolics and cavorts without a care for whoever gets in his way (note the extremely vivid timps at 7'52"), while the coda is full of tenderness. All in all, a rewarding and musically satisfying trio of performances, as exciting as any from the last 10 years or so, and for the most part superbly recorded.

Rob Cowan

Tchaikovsky

Manfred Symphony, Op 58

Russian National Orchestra / Mikhail Pletnev

Pentatone (P) 95 PTC5186 387 (59' • DDD/DSD)



You'd think this same team's own classic DG recording (12/94) would prove a

dauntingly tough act to follow, let alone supersede. And so it turns out, though there's ample evidence here nonetheless to suggest that Tchaikovsky's epic *Manfred* still means a very great deal to Mikhail Pletnev. This imposing SACD remake defiantly clocks in at just shy of one hour (nearly seven minutes longer than its predecessor), but Pletnev's interpretation has such grit, control and understanding that I seldom found my attention wavering – how skilfully he holds this sprawling canvas together. Of the subtle inner workings of Tchaikovsky's ambitious score Pletnev remains an unassailable master and his conviction is palpable. (I should also warn that his grunts and groans are often audible.) Nor is there any disputing the

tireless application and superior (sometimes breathtaking) co-ordination displayed by the Russian National Orchestra; Pletnev's antiphonally seated first and second fiddles are further boon, especially in the *scherzo*. I do, however, crave rather more of a cutting edge from the horns in particular, not to mention greater bloom and warmth than Pentatone's favoured Moscow studio acoustic can muster. Early on in the finale, I don't care for the way Pletnev slams on the brakes at 0'18" and again at 0'53" – nor, for that matter, the spurious muted trumpet from 2'46" – but, my goodness, what thrusting momentum and giddy excitement he generates in these bacchanalian pages (superbly crisp tambourine interjections, by the way), and how enviably hushed and concentrated is his handling of that tricky *Lento* episode that soon follows from 4'38" (a passage where so many performances have foundered).

Not a replacement for the DG version, then, but a powerfully integrated and genuinely absorbing supplement to it. A document, in sum, that any collector who has ever thrilled to this extraordinarily inventive and turbulent creation should try and hear.

Andrew Achenbach

Selected comparison:

Russian Nat Orch, Pletnev (12/94) (DG) 439 891-2GH

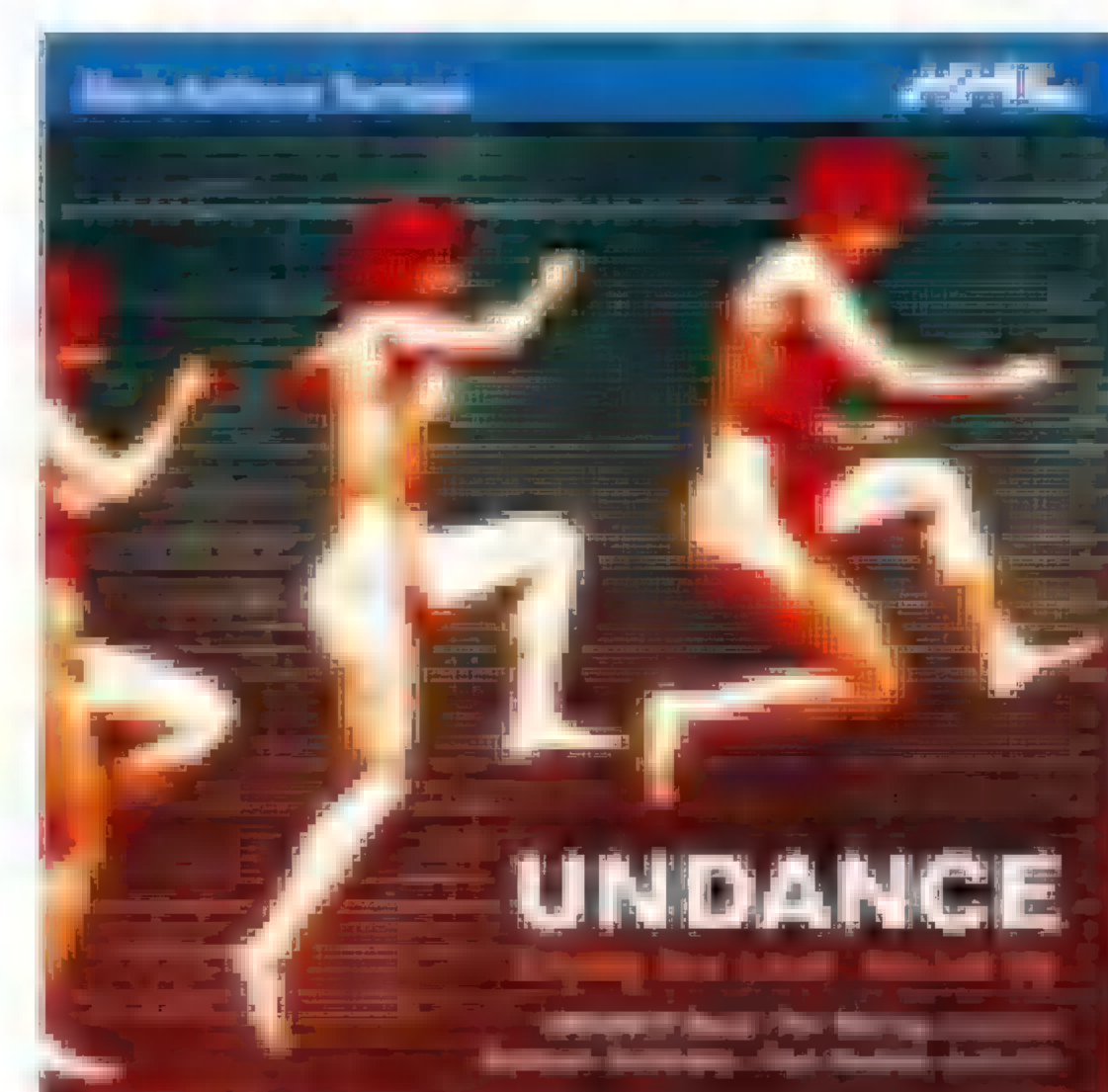
Turnage

Crying Out Loud^a. No Let Up^a. UNDANCE^b

^aRambert Orchestra / Paul Hoskins;

^bUNDANCE Band / Tim Murray

NMC (P) NMCD194 (51' • DDD)



As Paul Griffiths suggests in his booklet-note, the sheer rhythmic

quality of Mark-Anthony Turnage's music makes it surprising he had not been writing ballet music from the outset of his career. Two of the pieces on this new NMC disc are in fact concert commissions and only choreographed at a later date. Written for the Ensemble Modern, *Crying Out Loud* (2002) is among his most Stravinskian works in the way melodic elements seem constantly undercut and even subverted by a rhythmic framework whose sheer ruthlessness finally silences the more 'human' quality. Shorter and more systematic, *No Let Up* (2003) features an ensemble of wind and percussion in chamber music whose dialogue evinces a distinctly sardonic edge.

IN THE STUDIO

An inside view of who's before the mics and what they're recording

Americans at home in Oregon

Carlos Kalmar will continue his well-received series of themed recordings with the Oregon Symphony Orchestra on a disc of symphonic works from America by George Antheil (*A Jazz Symphony*), Walter Piston (Suite from *The Incredible Flutist*) and Aaron Copland (*Symphony No 3*). Pentatone will release the disc next March.

Meta4 record Bartók

Finnish string quartet **Meta4** have followed their Hänssler Classic recording of string quartets by Shostakovich – awarded a *Gramophone* Choice in 2012 – with quartets by Béla Bartók, including the Hungarian's First and Fifth Quartets. Hänssler will release the disc in October.



Hillier augments his Buxtehude

Paul Hillier (pictured) has followed his 2011 disc of cantatas by Dieterich Buxtehude with a further exploration of works by that composer alongside vocal music by his contemporaries Weckmann, Förster, Tunder, Geist and Bruhns. Dacapo will release the disc, featuring Hillier's Theatre of Voices, later this year.

Chailly back to Brahms

Riccardo Chailly was once more recording Brahms with his Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra for the microphones of Decca at the end of May, taking the esteemed orchestra through the composer's two Serenades. Decca will release the fruits of the Leipzig sessions in November.

Petrenko's Oslo Mahler

Vasily Petrenko has recorded Mahler's First Symphony with the Oslo Philharmonic, of which he became Music Director last September. The recording was made at the Oslo Concert Hall and is scheduled for release by LAWO Classics in August.

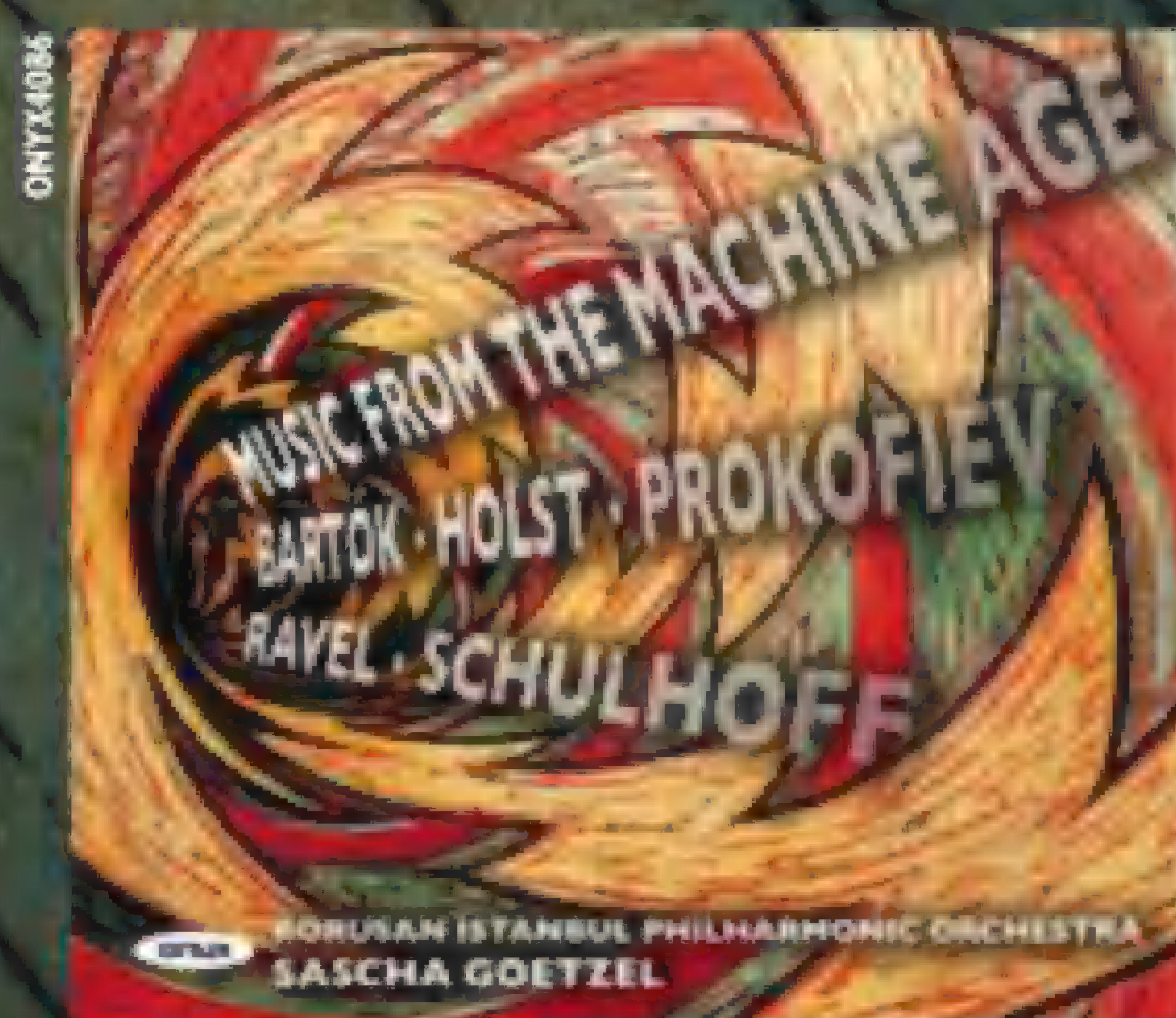
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Only with *UNDANCE* (2011) did Turnage take the plunge directly into ballet, in collaboration with the artist Mark Wallinger and choreographer Wayne McGregor – with a little help from Robert Sierra's verb pairings (akin to Brian Eno's Oblique Strategies cards), whose headings are the titles of each of the ballet's eight sections. It is the even-numbered among these which leave the most lasting impression: thus the ironic walking-bass motion of 'to walk/to run', the plaintive elegy of 'to slide/to fall', the lithe canonic interplay of 'to catch/to hop' and, finally, the fugal accumulation of 'to turn/to cover', which climaxes in a decisive chordal apotheosis.

A fearlessly committed account from the *UNDANCE* Band certainly presents this latter piece in the most favourable light, but the readings of those earlier works by the Rambert Orchestra cannot be faulted for their commitment. Upfront though never constricted sound is a further enhancement, as is Sarah Crompton's booklet essay on the birth of *UNDANCE*. A pity that *Trespass*, Turnage's subsequent ballet score for the Royal Ballet, could not be included here but hopefully that and maybe the string quartet *Twisted Blues with Twisted Ballad* (arguably its composer's strongest instrumental work in recent years) will find their way on to a future NMC release. In the meantime, the present disc can receive the warmest of recommendations.

Richard Whitehouse

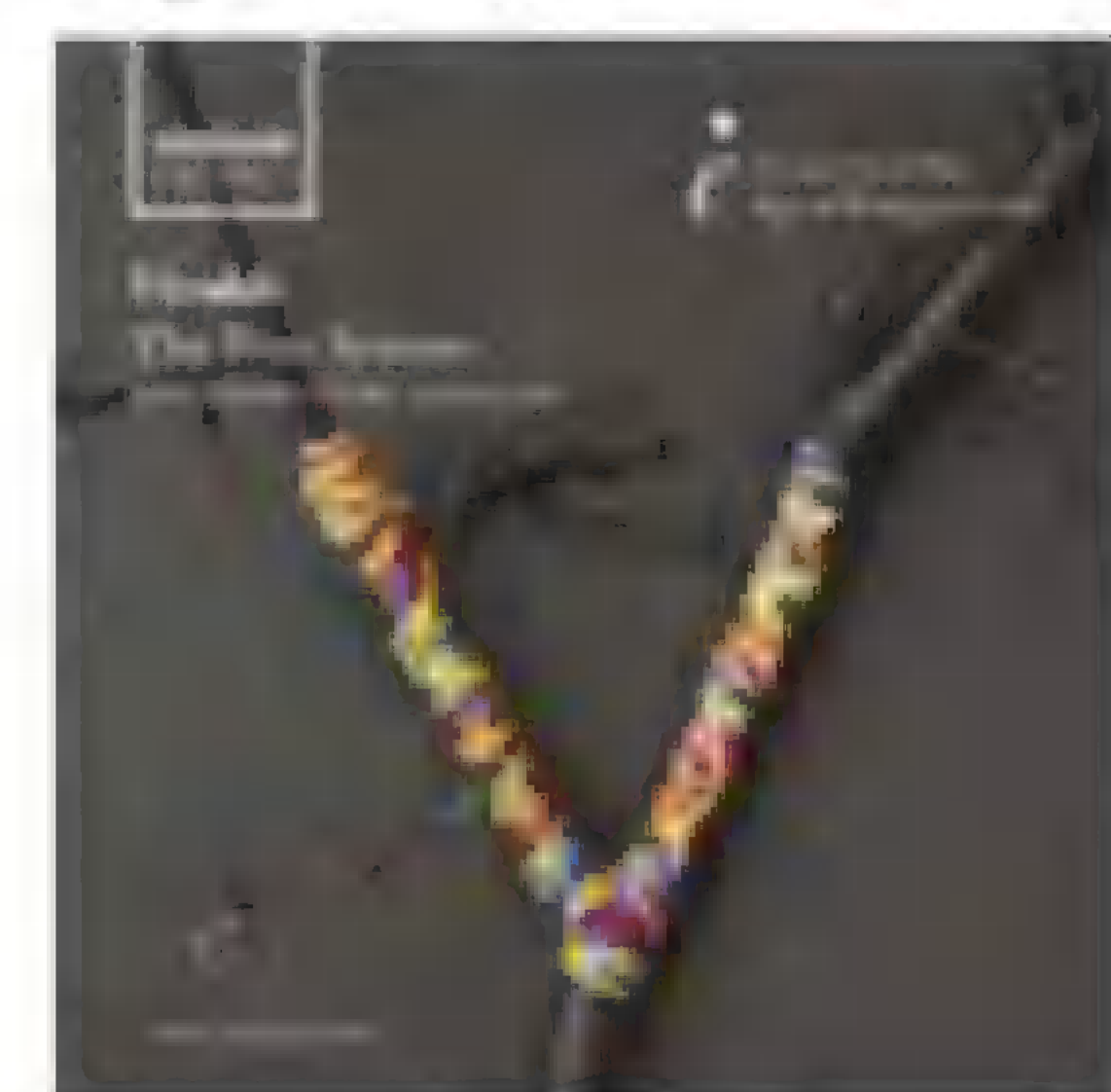
Vivaldi

The Four Seasons, Op 8 Nos 1-4

Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment /

Kati Debretzeni *vn*

Signum ® SIGCD377 (41' • DDD)



This is a recording of the evergreen *Four Seasons* to remember and return to. The playing is sublime. Kati Debretzeni is a breath of fresh air at any time of the year. The chamber ensemble from the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, led here by Alison Bury, includes a core of players that has been there from its formation, who continue to play with the same joyful camaraderie and artistic precision. The novelty of this recording is the inclusion of timings in the CD booklet that link the poetry that inspired Vivaldi to his music.

Lying behind this 'Guided tour of the *Four Seasons*' is Debretzeni's genuine desire

to educate as well as delight her listeners. In *Spring* she is playful and appealing in her solos, seemingly spontaneous in her ornamentation, and in the final solo of the 'Danza pastorale' holds the listener in thrall. The OAE members relish their roles, demonstrating superb control of textures and dynamics, and if I find the barking dog portrayed by the violas in the second movement to be slightly dozy, their tone colour and articulation is perfectly geared to the overall sound.

Whereas in the opening of *Spring* a bit of recorded birdsong mingles with those of the violins at 59", the equally vivid trio of bird calls in the *Allegro non moto* of *Summer* are entirely conjured by the players. Debretzeni evokes a moment of palpable intimacy when portraying the tears of the village boy in the last solo. The meteorological dramas in the second and third movements are thrillingly atmospheric, thanks to inspired leadership and exceptional orchestral rapport.

Debretzeni is beguiling, indeed, in her *Autumn* solos, the OAE equally at home as peasants, dancing or drunken, and as posh hunters in pursuit of prey. The harpsichordist Robert Howarth mesmerises us in the second movement; and, at the climax of the third, the orchestra contribute novel percussion effects at 2'14".

Winter under Debretzeni could hardly disappoint: she and the OAE make us shudder with cold and at breaking ice; praise, too, for the theorbo-playing of Elizabeth Kenny in the first and last movements. Debretzeni ensures that the *Largo* trots along, light-hearted and impervious to the rain, and brings a swagger to the finale. Bravo!

Julie Anne Sadie

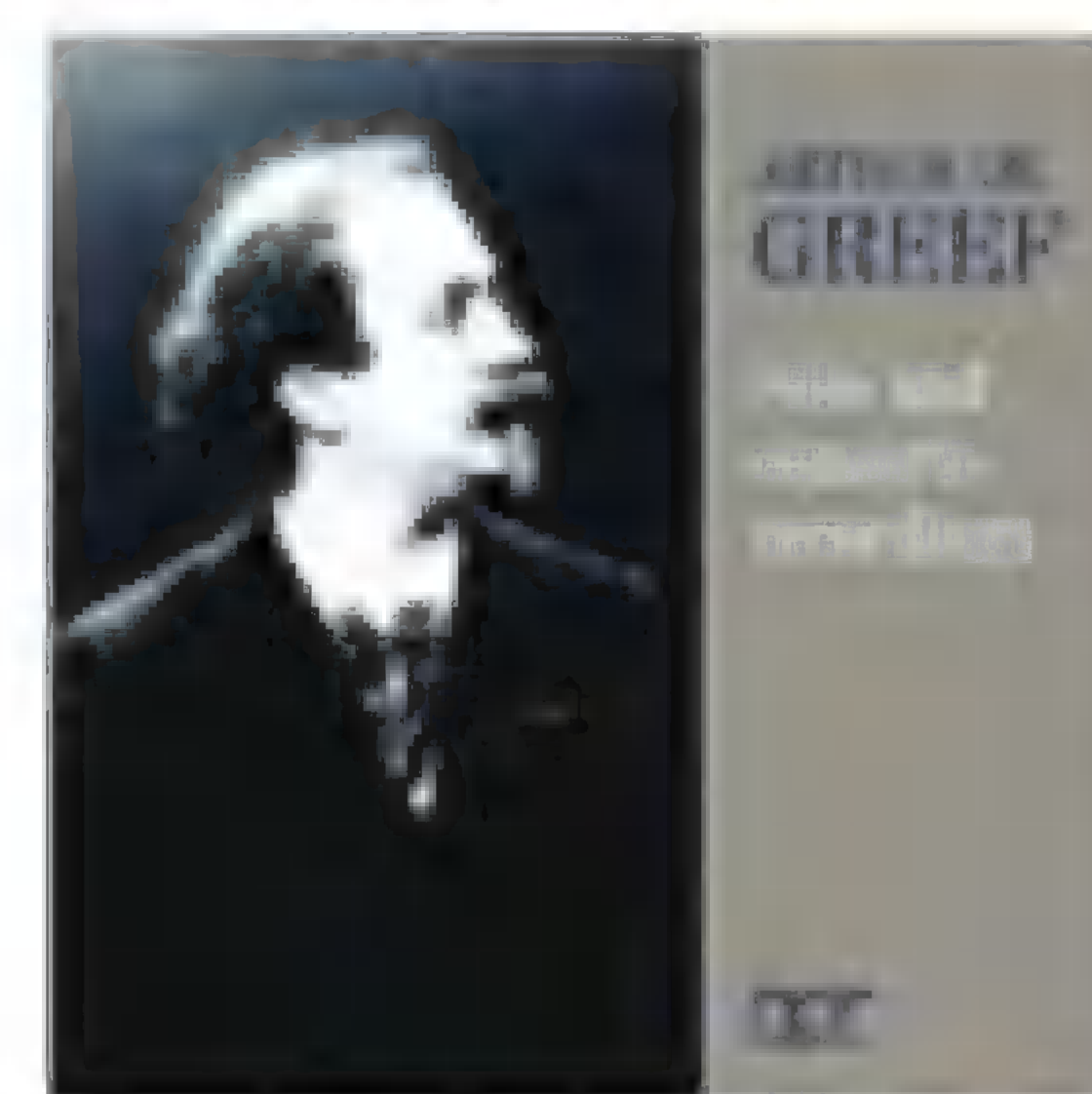
Arthur de Greef

'The Complete Electric Solo and Concerto Recordings - The Complete Acoustic Solo Recordings and Selected Concerto Recordings'

Arthur de Greef *pf*

APR ® ④ APR7401 (4h 25' • ADD)

Recorded 1917-31



The name of Arthur de Greef (1862-1940) is never mentioned in discussions of the so-called Golden Age defined by the playing of Rachmaninov, Hofmann, Rosenthal, Godowsky et al. Yet, if the recordings here are anything to go by, he deserves to be. All of them are here except the acoustic *Hungarian Fantasy* and (abridged) Grieg and Saint-Saëns

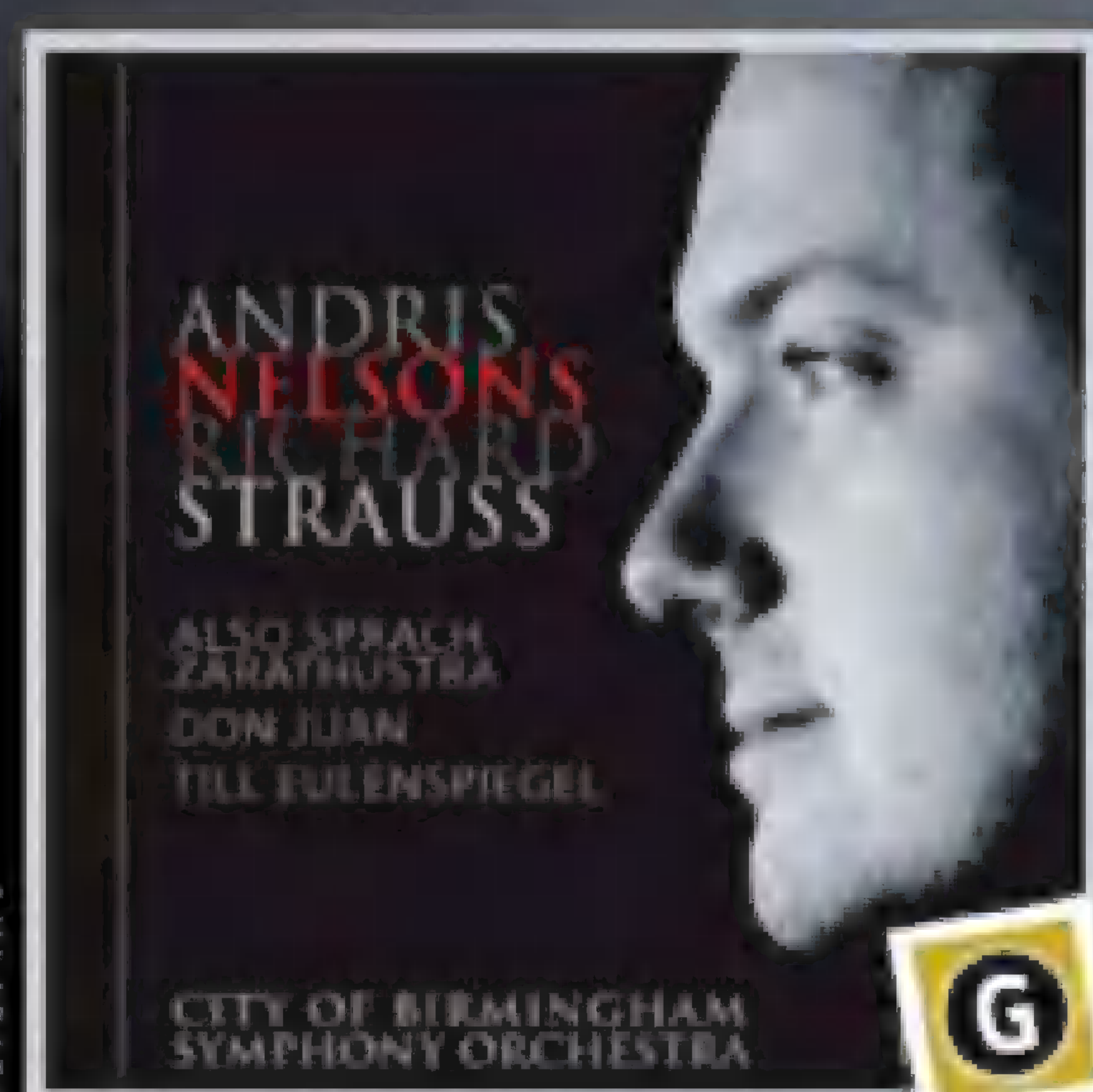
concertos, plus electrical recordings of Beethoven's *Kreutzer* Sonata (1925) and Schubert's *Sonatina* No 3 (1927), both with Isolde Menges. Many of the more than 40 titles presented here appeared on two Pearl CDs in 1993 and 2000 in excellent transfers. APR's are smoother and cleaner, and come with a better booklet (Jonathan Summers) and superior annotation which, however, omits to mention that all the discs – from 1917 to 1931 – were made at the HMV studio in Hayes apart from the electric versions of the works with orchestra, which were recorded at the Queen's Hall.

De Greef's first session for HMV, on December 27, 1917, yielded five titles: Rubinstein's *Melody in F* with, on the reverse side, *Pensée musicale*, a limp salon offering by HMV's house conductor, Landon Ronald, a brilliant accompanist with whom de Greef would make all his piano-and-orchestra recordings; Schumann's *Arabeske*, Op 18, coupled, unusually, with the finale of the same composer's *Faschingsschwank aus Wien*, which reinforce one critic's characterisation of de Greef's playing in 1890 as 'unostentatious and refined'; and *Album Leaf* from Grieg's Op 28, the first of several important recordings of the Norwegian composer's music. This last is delightfully tender and playful in accord with the description of the pianist by his English pupil Maurice Cole as 'gentle, friendly, humorous, [who] looked with his little beard something of a cross between a Spanish grandee and William Shakespeare'.

De Greef's earliest collaboration with Ronald is a stolid account from September 1922 of the *Symphonic Variations* by his compatriot César Franck. Liszt's *Hungarian Rhapsody* No 12, recorded a few days later, boasts several variants to the text, perhaps sanctioned by the composer, with whom de Greef studied for two years in the early 1880s. The final pages are dispatched with splendid panache. Disc 2 has more Liszt: the two concertos (No 1 from 1923, No 2 from 1930) are the only recordings of them by a pupil other than Emil von Sauer. Equally valuable is the *Hungarian Fantasy*, with frequent sonorous bass tremolos making convincing additions to the score, the *Polonaise* in E major, and a remake of the *Hungarian Rhapsody* No 12. These are arguably de Greef's two greatest solo recordings – authoritative, fearless and compelling.

ANDRIS NELSONS

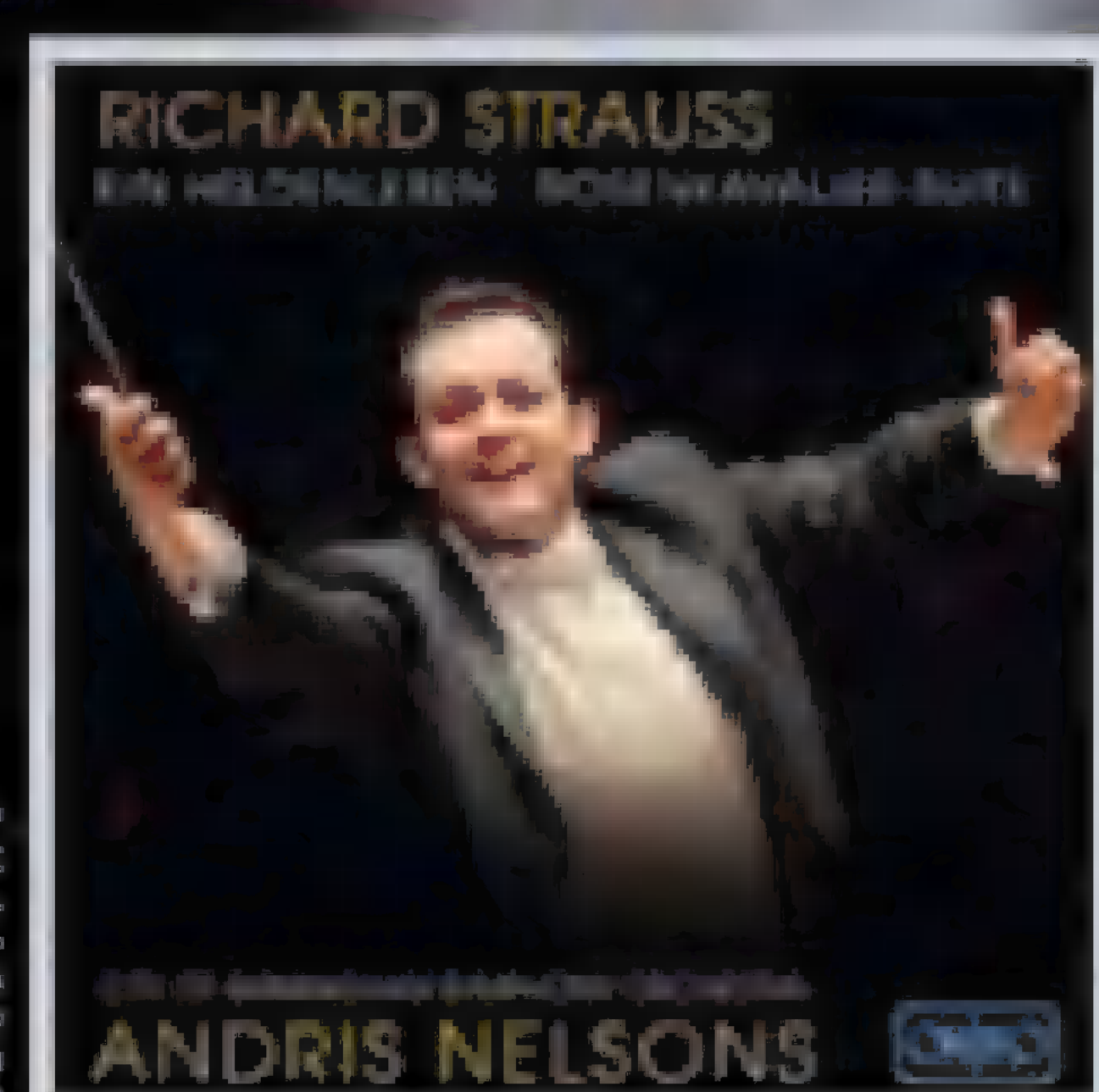
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Further treasures are on Disc 3, though the *Soirée de Vienne* and three Chopin Waltzes recorded in November 1927 suffer from a poor-sounding piano. Here is the first complete recording ever made of Chopin's *Funeral March* Sonata, a very early electric (November 1925) but which, perhaps because of the number of takes needed, sounds unspontaneous and routine. Far better are Raff's *La fileuse* and three Moszkowski charmers that end with the brilliant Valse in E major, Op 34 No 1 (slightly abridged). Why does no one play it these days?

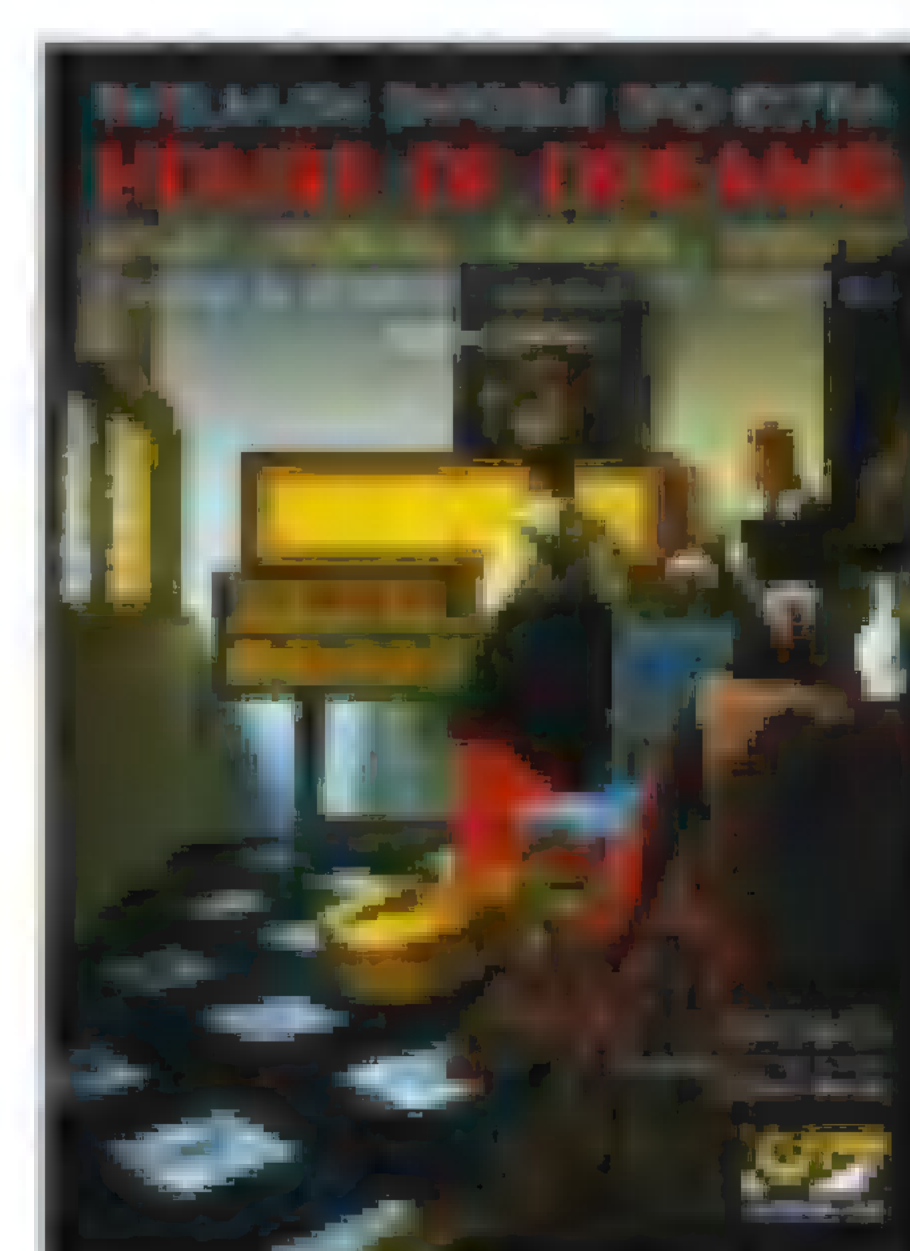
Disc 4 has, perhaps, the most important recordings of this collection. De Greef knew Saint-Saëns well and was much admired by the composer. As I reported in my survey of the G minor Piano Concerto (3/13), De Greef's 1928 recording holds up well against its myriad successors, though Mark Obert-Thorn clearly encountered the same problem as Seth B Winner (for Pearl) with the side turn at 2'16" in the *Scherzo*. Of even greater significance is the 1927 recording of the Grieg Piano Concerto, an essential reference point for anyone studying the concerto for performance. Not only had de Greef's teacher Louis Brassin given the first Brussels performance of the work, but Grieg and de Greef became close friends, with the composer declaring in a letter that 'De Greef is the best interpreter of my music I have met with. It is surprising how he understands my meaning...I feel happy and honoured by his sympathy for my art.' The two performed the concerto together several times so we may take this interpretation, which ventures so imaginatively beyond the limits of the printed score, to be authentic. Half a dozen Grieg miniatures in amazingly clean transfers complete the collection with the addition of de Greef's final issued recording (1931), a quirky choice of the Gavotte from Prokofiev's *Classical* Symphony, a remake of his own transcription of Grétry's *Danse en rond* and Raff's *La fileuse*, the latter designated confusingly to track 11 of disc 3.

Dedicated pianophiles need not hesitate. For others, the Liszt, Saint-Saëns and Grieg recordings are essential listening.

Jeremy Nicholas

'House of Dreams'

Featuring excerpts from works by JS Bach, Handel, Marais, Purcell, Sweelinck, Telemann and Vivaldi
Tafelmusik Baroque Orchestra / Jeanne Lamon *vn*
Tafelmusik Media ® ② (CD + )
TMK1020DVDCD (72' + 90' • DDD •
NTSC • 16:9 • DD5.1 & PCM stereo • 0)



A couple of years back, Tafelmusik's 'Galileo Project' (6/12) linked Baroque music with images and readings reflecting the scientific advances of the day. It was unpretentious and well executed, and it worked, probably because it had origins in a live production. 'House of Dreams' is a similarly conceived sequence, though this time with its narrator on film rather than among the musicians, the reason being that he has hopped over the Atlantic to explore five private homes in Europe where great music and art mixed: the Handel House in London, once home (incredibly) to paintings by Watteau, Canaletto and Rembrandt; the Venetian Palazzo Smith Mangilli Valmarana, Canaletto-packed residence of the British ambassador Joseph Smith; the Golden ABC bookshop in Delft, whose proprietor somehow inherited 21 Vermeers; the Palais-Royal in Paris, where the Regent of France's 500-piece collection included Titians and Tintoretts; and the Leipzig home of the Borse family, neighbours and friends of the Bachs, where luxury mirrors fought for wallspace with works by Rembrandt, Holbein and Rubens.

No doubt it would be hard to go wrong combining movements by Handel, Vivaldi, Purcell, Marais and Bach with such images but the match-ups here, chosen by Alison Mackay, Tafelmusik's double-bass player and deviser of the show, are a mixture of the predictable (Vivaldi with Canaletto) and the surprising (Handel with Watteau). A particularly imaginative stroke is to focus on the Ovidian theme of Marais's opera *Alcyone* (represented by a suite of dances), though it is sobering to see that footage of two seabirds skimming the waves to spoken lines from Ovid is actually the most moving moment in the whole film.

The live version appears to have featured the artworks projected behind the performers, who play standing in various loose formations. For the DVD the two are intercut, allowing telling focus on such details as a small dog in Canaletto's *Piazza San Marco* or a washerwoman down a side-alley in Vermeer's *The Little Street*. The performances, as always with Tafelmusik, are joyous and refined, and it is a pleasure to see the musicians swaying, smiling and playing from memory. Blair Williams's narrations are somewhat over-emphatic, but then he is supposed to be a culture-loving Canadian tourist, not Kenneth Clark. Less profound than the 'Galileo Project', I daresay, but a nice enough way

to spend an hour and a half all the same.

Lindsay Kemp

'El maestro Farinelli'

CPE Bach Sinfonia, 'Fandango', Wq178 H653
Conforto La festa cinese - Overture Corradini
Baile de las máscaras - excs Hasse Sinfonia,
Op 5 No 6 Jommelli Periodical Overture
Marcolini La diucha en la desgracia y vida
campestre - Overture Nebra Seguidillas and
Canción. Vendado es amor, no es ciego -
Tempestad grande^a Porpora Carlo il calvo -
Overture. Polifemo - Alto Giove^a
Traetta Armida - Overture
^aBejun Mehta *counterten*
Concerto Köln / Pablo Heras-Casado
Archiv © 479 2050AH (69' • DDD)



In 1737 Farinelli travelled to Madrid. Once in the Spanish capital of the

melancholic Bourbon King Philip V, he was invited to quit his contract in London and instead take up permanent residence at the Spanish court (one might quip he left Chelsea for Real Madrid). The celebrated castrato often sang privately for Philip V, and legend has it that Porpora's 'Alto Giove' was one of the monarch's favourites; Bejun Mehta's laboured performance tends to place emphasis on episodic moments at the expense of prolonged melodic lines. Farinelli continued serving the next king, Ferdinand VI, until retiring in 1760.

The much-missed Archiv label is relaunched with this selection of mostly orchestral music allegedly associated with Farinelli's musical direction of lavish entertainments and operas at Aranjuez and Buen Retiro. Scratch the surface of the concept and it disentangles, not least for the inclusion of irrelevant overtures by Jommelli and Traetta (both of them enjoyable). There's infectious fun from a battery of tinkling percussion and an extrovert wittiness of phrase in excerpts from *Baile de las máscaras* by Francesco Corradini, who did actually work alongside Farinelli in Madrid. So did Nicola Conforta, whose overture to *La festa cinese* gets proceedings off with a colourful bang. Perhaps censure for conceptual tenuousness is moderated because Concerto Köln's zesty punchiness is a good fit for the dynamism of conductor Pablo Heras-Casado – nowhere more compellingly than in CPE Bach's vibrant *Fandango* Sinfonia in E minor (no connection to Farinelli but an entertaining piece well worth hearing).

David Vickers

Brahms's Clarinet Quintet

Martin Fröst reveals the secrets of Brahms's introspective late masterpiece to *Lindsay Kemp*

Richard Mühlfeld must have been unique,' says Martin Fröst of the clarinetist for whom Brahms wrote two sonatas, a trio and a quintet. 'I'm quite sure that, besides the musicianship, the sound he produced must have been something special. I once heard an interview with a guy who had heard him, and he said that he had such a rich vibrato, not like the others. Of course, it's not usual today for a clarinet to play with more vibrato than the strings, and Joachim [the great violinist and friend of Brahms whose quartet premiered the Quintet with Mühlfeld in 1891] maybe played with not so much vibrato, but it seems Mühlfeld played with it all the time. I'm sure he had a natural talent for colour and sound.'

Brahms came out of retirement in the 1890s to write those pieces for Mühlfeld, the principal clarinet of the Meiningen court orchestra, and all four works have an autumnal feel to them. It is the Quintet, however, which stands out as a masterpiece of sustained melancholy and wistful, aching nostalgia. Fröst has just recorded it for BIS with a powerful line-up of friends – violinists Janine Jansen and Boris Brovstyn, viola player Maxim Rysanov and cellist Torleif Thedéen – and when we meet he has still only heard the first edit. Rather unexpectedly, I find myself briefly being asked by Fröst what I think it sounds like ('pretty good' is the gist of my answer).

The Quintet and its companions are enough to make Brahms an important presence in any clarinetist's life

'The dialogues are so simple but they are filled with that mixture of resistance and longing – Martin Fröst

but Fröst says that in any case he was brought up on the composer. 'My father, who was a doctor, played viola and loved Brahms. I first heard the Quintet on a recording my father bought me, and my first impression was that it is pretty introverted. As a kid you don't really have boundaries, so I was totally blown away by the emotion of it.' It was a while however, before he got to play it himself. 'I grew up in the north of Sweden, and we didn't have so many good string players up there. Today I play it whenever I get the opportunity, which means when I have the right people



Martin Fröst leads a double career as clarinetist and conductor

together and plenty of time to work on it. This is more of a true quintet than most – it isn't a string quartet plus clarinet, and you have to have time to develop it.'

That much is evident almost from the beginning of the *Allegro* first movement; the theme that appears 14 bars in (track 1, 0'40") has the clarinet on low holding notes, down with the viola and below the cello. 'It sounds fantastic,' says Fröst. 'Like Mozart, Brahms liked the clarinet's chalumeau register and to use it as a bass. It's great when in the development it starts low (8'11"), then climbs to a higher singing register.' Some of Fröst's favourite moments in the whole piece are in this development section, for instance at



The historical view

George Bernard Shaw

A review in The World, May 11, 1892

'I never heard such a work in my life. Brahms' enormous gift of music is paralleled by nothing on earth but Mr Gladstone's gift of words: it is verbosity which outfaces its own commonplaceness by dint of sheer magnitude.'

Clara Schumann's diary

March 17, 1893

'What interesting music. And how Mühlfeld plays! As if he had been born for this work. His playing is at once delicate, warm and unaffected and at the same time it shows the most perfect technique and command of the instrument.'

Peter Latbam

In Brahms (Master Musicians), 1966

'The music breathes a regret that is altogether human for the passing of beauty. The kindness, the love for his fellows that all too seldom succeeded in breaching the formidable barrier he had set up, find utterance at last – and it is too late.'

5'56", 'when it starts as if it's a repeat of the opening, but then suddenly there is stillness and we are searching to find the harmony. When we do, it's something magical.' Then there is the hushed, *quasi sostenuto* version of the transition theme (7'07"): 'It's as if Brahms is saying "please don't touch me, don't come too close", but at the same time it's such passionate music. The dialogues are so simple but they are filled with that mixture of resistance and longing.'

This mixture, or balance perhaps, is a recurring obsession in Fröst's discussion of the Quintet; when he talks about breathing it is 'putting on the brakes and the gas at the same time', and when he coos over the first movement's peaceful final bars it is to point out that its mood and material are echoed at the very end of the piece, and that 'you must save something, not stretch it out too much.'

The place in the work where one might most legitimately cut loose comes in the *Adagio* second movement, whose extraordinary central section (starting at tr 2, 2'54") brings string *tremolos* supporting extravagant, gypsy-style clarinet flourishes. 'In the year or so leading up to the recording I tried many different ways of doing this in concerts. At first I let myself go totally wild – you know, this is folk music!' (Fröst sings his 'wild' version, notably different from the recorded one.) 'Then in the end I came back to something more restrained. The dynamics in the score are contradictory here and that means you can play it many ways, but I think it should maybe be a dreamy kind of gypsy music, not totally wild. There are places where the music tries to break out, but always Brahms gets the strings to bring it back into order.' Fröst sings again to show the calming effect of the suspension in bar 55 (3'58") and the first-violin line that immediately follows. 'It's like the violin is a story-teller bringing us back into reality, before the clarinet starts going off again.'

The third-movement *Andantino* is a *scherzo*-cum-intermezzo, though one in which the middle section, marked *Presto non assai, ma con sentimento*, is longer than the outer sections. Fröst feels that the contrast is more one of character than of tempo, but finding that character is 'tricky', especially in the central section (tr 3, starting at 1'27"): 'If it's too sparkling you miss something. There are dots in the other parts but not in the first violin, which is perhaps how you can get it to be *con sentimento*. This part somehow has to be something melancholic and introverted. And the very last chord should be a short puff, transparent, like a little dream. If you sit on it, you destroy the movement.'

The Quintet ends with a set of variations on a simple-sounding theme, and as always with variations one needs to get the tempo (or tempi) just right. Fröst again reckons that there is a basic pulse to his performance, and it is at the junctions between variations that the greatest care has to be taken over timing. 'At the same time, I like it that individual players can dictate the mood of a variation if they lead it off, that they can say "this is how I want to play it!"' The ending is a drawn-out reminiscence (starting at tr 4, 7'15") of the close of the first movement, mixed with fragments of the last variation. 'Brahms makes so many signs of withdrawal in the dynamics here, and it's difficult to know how much to help him out,' says Fröst. 'I don't think there's a right answer, but I think you shouldn't add too much hesitation of your own. I love that Brahms dared to take so long over it himself.' When it comes, the final chord is a chilling *forte-piano* – 'like the last energy going out'. **G**

► To read *Gramophone's* review of Martin Fröst's Brahms, turn to page 50

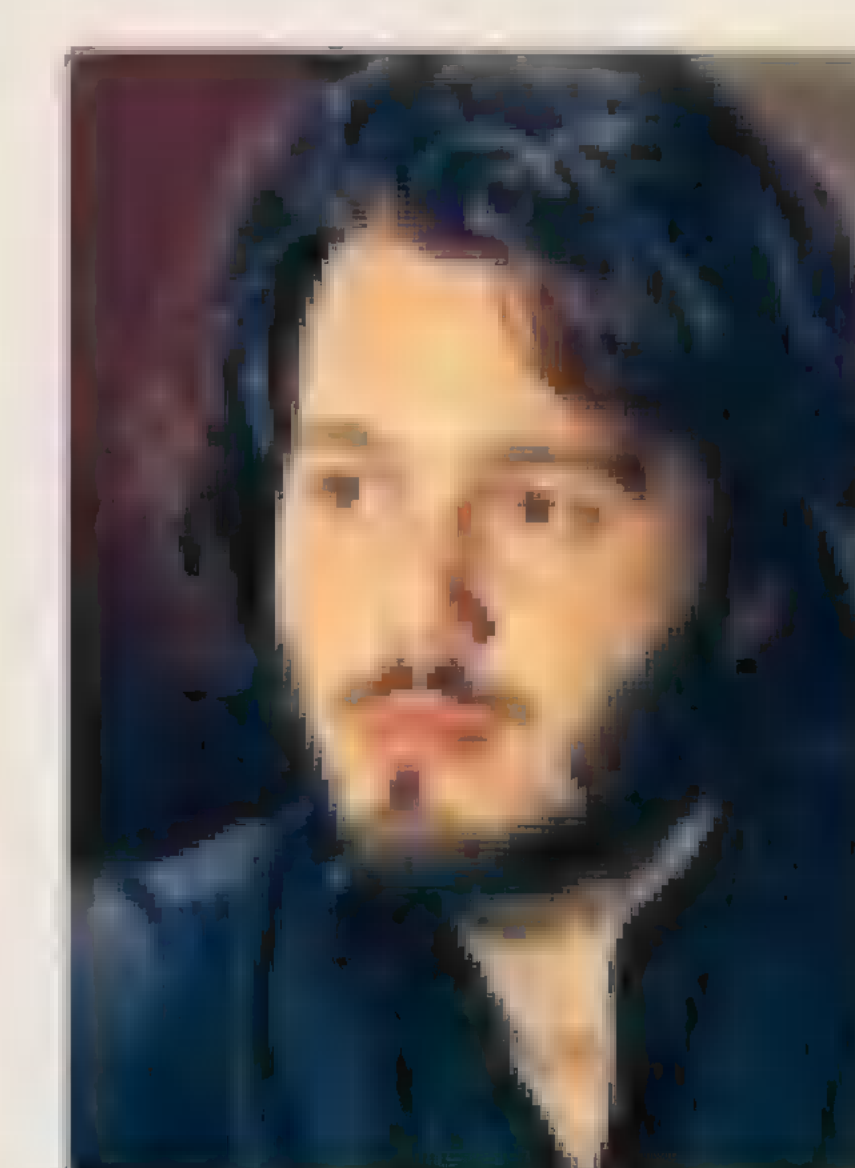


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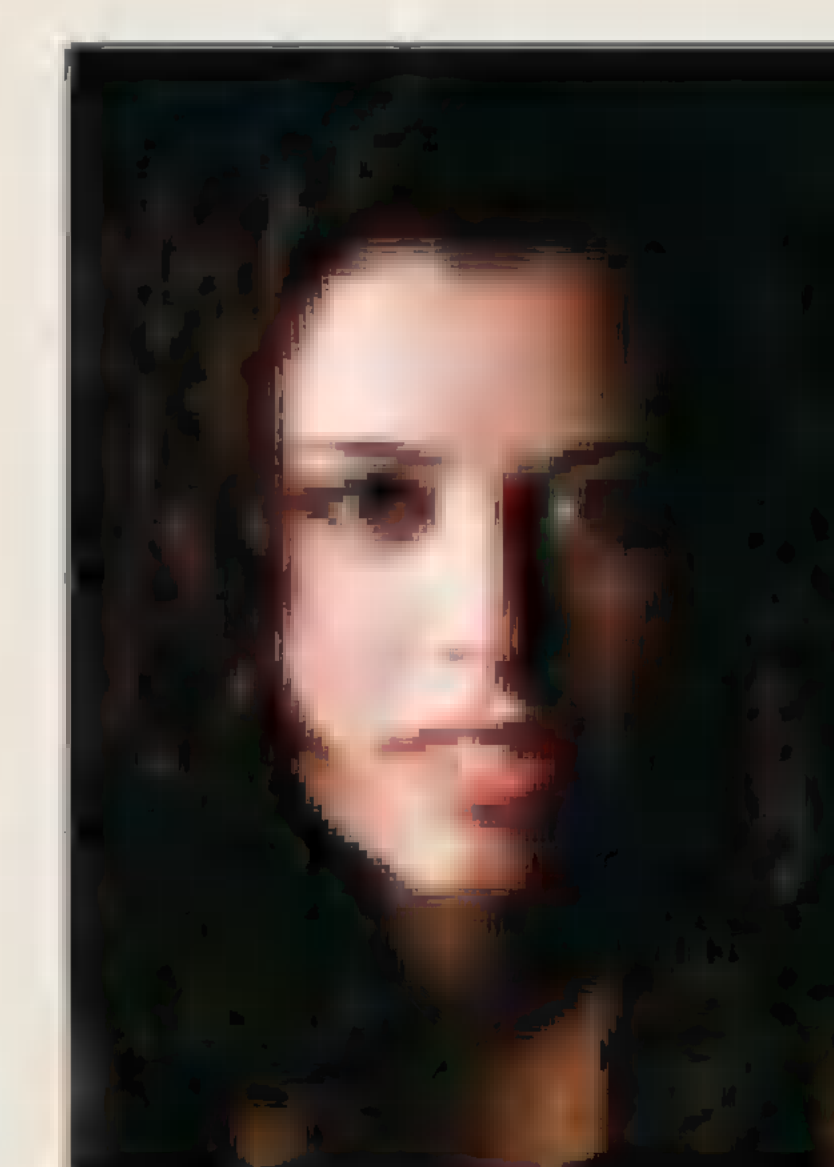
2nd Prize
Steven Lin



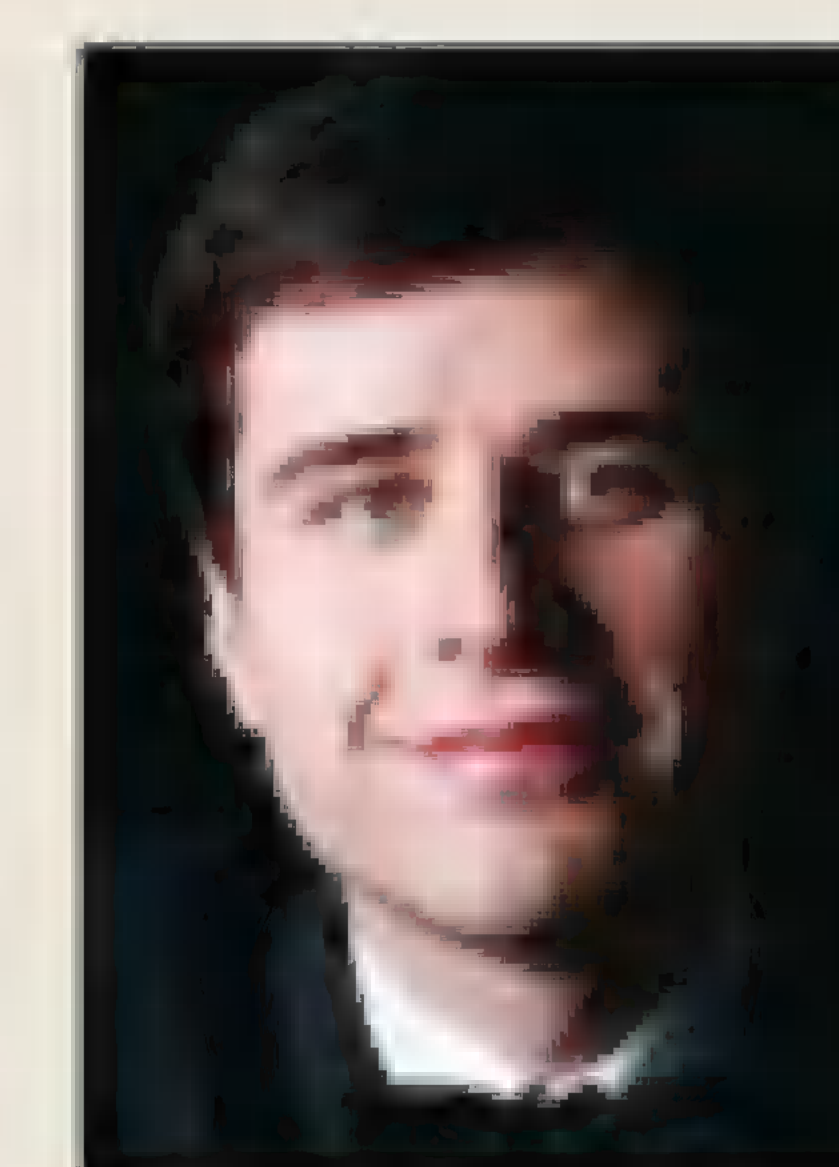
3rd Prize
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Finalist Prize
Leonardo Colafelice



Finalist Prize
MariaMazo



Finalist Prize
Andrejs Osokins



Chamber



Caroline Gill listens to Italian violin sonatas from Hagai Shaham: *'His warmth of tone and instinctive feel for melody, time and pace all suit this music beautifully'* ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 52**



Duncan Druce compares four new Brahms violin sonata recordings: *'With Brahms there's no single, correct interpretation; his scores are full of suggestions to players'* ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 53**

Arriaga

'The Complete String Quartets'
Three String Quartets.
Tema variado en cuarteto, Op 17
La Ritirata
Glossa © GCD923102 (77' • DDD)



Not knowing anything about this repertoire or the personality behind it, one's initial

reaction is a unique convergence of musical cross-currents that's so unimposing, so free of tension you could mistake the music for being inconsequential. Instead, it's the work of a boy composer who seems to be writing for intimate friends with every belief that it's going to be loved at first hearing. And once accustomed to its rules and boundaries, the music has at least as much charm and distinction as Boccherini.

Juan Crisóstomo de Arriaga (1806-26) was a prodigy composer whose three string quartets were written some two years before he died. They have a consistency of quality not heard elsewhere in his surviving output, and have a clear creative arc, first showing the composer demonstrating his competence and ingenuity in a medium dominated by Mozart and then moving on to put an increasingly distinctive stamp on the medium.

Presented in the order of their composition, the sunny Quartet No 2 in A comes first, and it feels like a practice effort for the higher-content works that follow. Quartet No 1 in D minor has piquant moments of Spanish influence that peak out in unexpected places such as the mid-section of the third movement. Quartet No 3 in E flat is a gem, fully realised with purposeful thematic content and genuinely original twists on Classical-era *Sturm und Drang*. Yes, Arriaga was a great might-have-been.

The accomplished period-instrument group La Ritirata play the music with serious consideration of period style in matters involving phrasing and *portamento*.

However laudable this approach is, the slender moments are clearly defined and have more momentum amid the incisive rhythms and brisk tempi of Camerata Boccherini on Naxos. However, the Ritirata disc has the advantage of the *Tema variado en cuarteto*, Op 17, a delightful piece with a rare sense of uninhibited play.

David Patrick Stearns

Stg Qts – selected comparison:

Camerata Boccherini (NAXO) 8 557628

JS Bach

Three Sonatas for Viola da gamba and Harpsichord, BWV1027-1029. Sonata for Violin and Harpsichord No 6, BWV1019

Marianne Muller *va da gamba*

Françoise Lengellé *hpd*

Zig-Zag Territoires © ZTZ340 (71' • DDD)



Repeated listening to Bach's Sonatas for viola da gamba and harpsichord deepens one's sense of their formal variety within a very focused stylistic ambit, reminiscent of the language of the *Brandenburg Concertos* perhaps most especially. Another striking trait running across all three is the role of the sustained pedal-notes exchanged in dialogue between the protagonists, which poses a challenge to both.

These two French musicians cultivate a no-nonsense approach, the hallmark of which is steadiness and solidity. There is little discernible play within or between beats in the faster movement (as attested by the solo harpsichord movement of BWV1019 also included here), and a seeming decision not to milk the expressivity of the slow movements. Those who resist a mannered approach to their Bach may well approve but the sustained notes mentioned earlier seem to me to hold the key to a more nuanced approach. The singing style so often evoked by contemporary writers in relation to the viola da gamba requires that they be treated in a spirit, shall we say, of refined sensibility that ought surely to pervade the whole.

That's to say that mannerism ought not to be avoided here but embraced, as in the comparatively recent (2011) recording by Lucile Boulanger and Arnaud de Pasquale for Alpha, for example: a more 'Frenchified' Bach, perhaps, but none the worse for it. Another alternative, though slightly rougher round the edges, is from Paolo Pandolfo for Harmonia Mundi, which includes a fascinating transcription of the Cello Suite in D minor – a more satisfying 'filler' than the transcribed version of odd hotchpotch BWV1019 offered here. **Fabrice Fitch**

Va da gamba Sons – selected comparisons:

Boulanger, De Pasquale (ALPH) ALPHAI61

Pandolfo, Alessandrini (HARM) HMA195 5218

Brahms

Clarinet Quintet, Op 115^a. Clarinet Trio, Op 114^b. Fünf Lieder, Op 105^c – No 1, Wie Melodien zieht es mir; No 2, Immer leiser wird mein Schlummer, Feldeinsamkeit, Op 86 No 2^c. Mädchenlied, Op 107 No 5^c. Die Mainacht, Op 43 No 2^c. Vergebliches Ständchen, Op 84 No 4^c

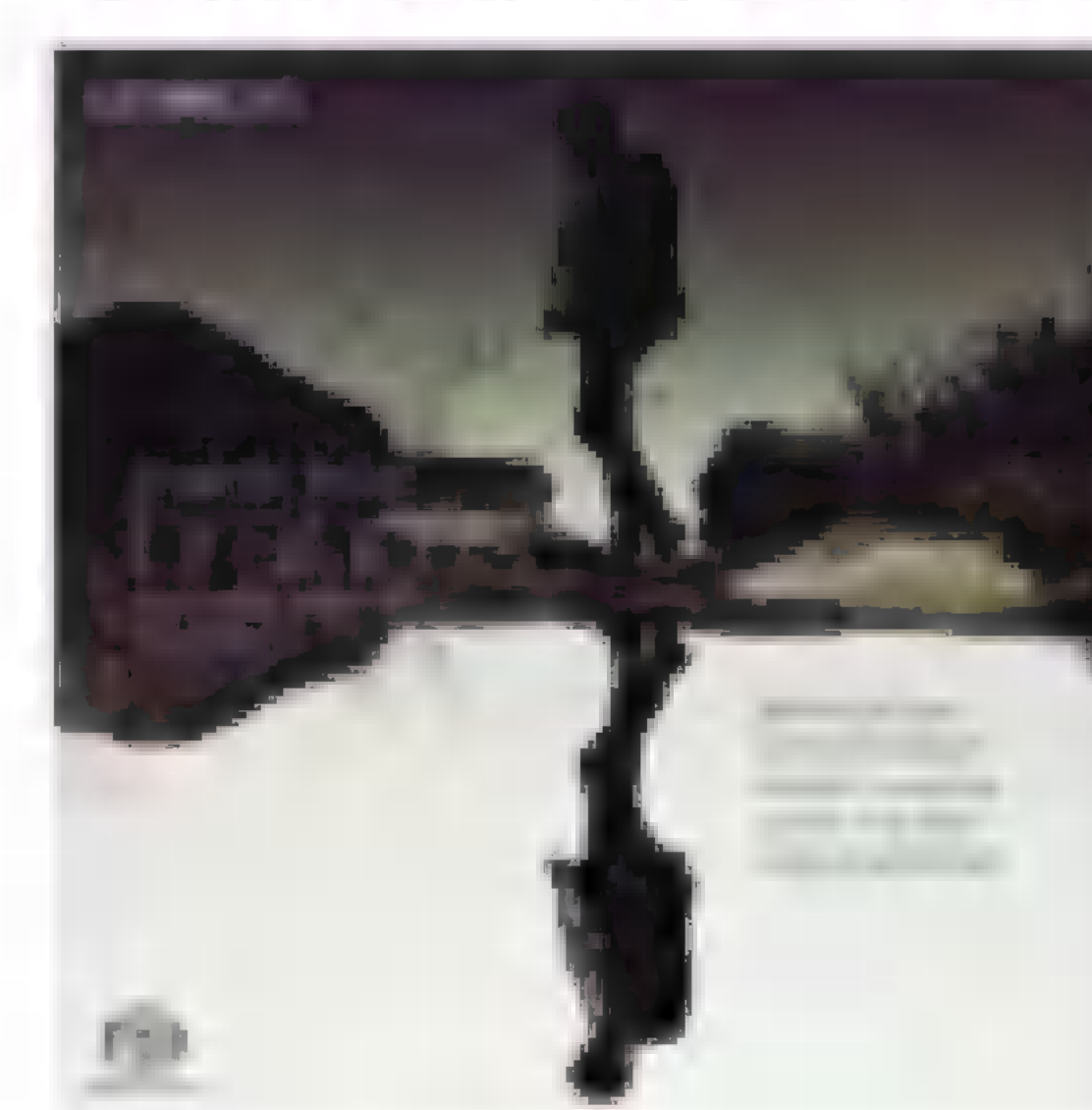
Martin Fröst *cl*^a **Janine Jansen**, ^a**Boris Brovtsyn** *vns*

^a**Maxim Rysanov** *va* ^{ab}**Torleif Thedéen** *vc*

^{bc}**Roland Pöntinen** *pf*

BIS © **BIS2063** (79' • DDD/DSD)

^bFrom **BIS-SACD1353** (4/06)



Contradictions rule. Brahms's biographer Florence May (1905) says of the Clarinet

Quintet: 'The tone of gentle loving regret that prevails suggests the composer's feeling that the evening is not far away from him.' William Murdoch (1933) disagrees: 'Rapturous, one can hardly believe that the composer is not a young man full of the joy of life.' Early recordings are divided too, Charles Draper (1928) broadly closer to May whereas Reginald Kell (1937), Frederick Thurston (1941), Leopold Wlach and Alfred Boskovsky (1950s) are generally with Murdoch. Martin Fröst finds the tone of gentle love but no regret, autumnal but not wistful,

with a young man's spring fire coursing through the *scherzo*. Sensuous beauty and taut sinew mingle for an interpretation from five soloists whose fastidious attention to internal balance and every musical detail result in sovereign excellence, in a sovereign recording.

Fröst's control of instrumental colour is superfine, intensity of phrases shaped through swell and diminution of sound, timbres voiced to express the character of words in the transcribed songs. But breathing noises intrude and Pöntinen is backwardly placed, as he is in the Trio, a reissue from 2004 now sounding dated in places. Still, there is no gainsaying his contribution either as a duo partner or as a member of an ensemble; and he enhances a performance of the Trio that combines impassioned zeal in the outer movements, longing in the *Adagio*, a touch of nostalgia in the *Andante grazioso*. The scene-stealer, though, is the Quintet. **Nalen Anthoni**

Cl Quint – selected comparisons:

Draper, Lener Qt (1/30th, 1/98) (EMI) 566422-2

Kell, Busch Qt (5/38th, 6/91) (TEST) SBT1001

Boskovsky, Vienna Octet (3/54th, 9/03) (TEST) SBT1282

Wlach, Vienna Konzerthaus Qt

(3/54th) (DG) 479 2343GB40

Thurston, Griller Qt (4/05) (TEST) SBT1366

Cl Trio – selected comparison:

Kam, Hehnchen, Rivinius (12/09) (BERL) 0016382BC

Bridge • Britten

'Reflections'

Bridge Viola (Cello) Sonata (arr Outram).

There is a willow grows aslant a brook

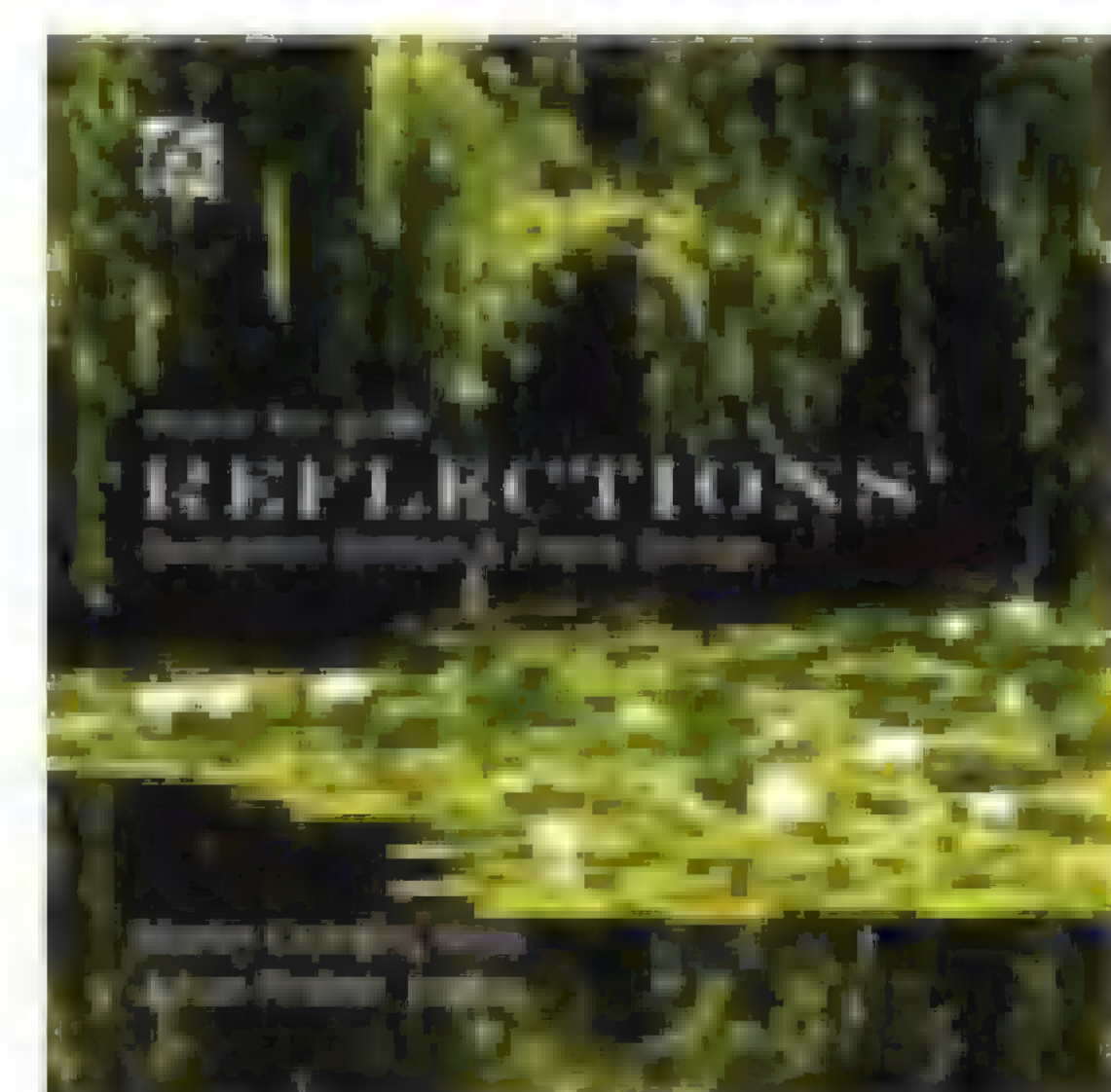
(arr Britten). *Pensiero*. *Allegro appassionato*

Britten Reflection. Portrait No 2, 'EBB'

(arr Outram). *Lachrymae*, Op 48. *Elegy*

Martin Outram *va* **Julian Rolton** *pf*

Nimbus Alliance © NI6253 (67' • DDD)



This is the second disc to take Britten's early, Schoenberg-influenced piece

Reflection as its inspiration. Last year Naxos issued a recital by Matthew Jones with the same title (2/14) that surveyed Britten's chamber works for violin and viola, a useful programme even if some of the items were rather slight pieces of juvenilia. Martin Outram, viola player of the Maggini Quartet, presents a different focus, bringing together works for viola by Britten and his teacher Frank Bridge, albeit a couple of them were originally intended for other instruments and are heard in Outram's arrangements.

The largest work is Bridge's Cello Sonata, which many collectors will know

from the recording made by Rostropovich and Britten. It is interesting to ponder what might have been if Britten had chosen to make an arrangement of it for viola, his own preferred instrument (his imaginative arrangement of Bridge's *There is a willow grows aslant a brook* is one of the most touching items here, as it was on the Naxos disc). Outram's performance of his own arrangement feels edgier than the golden-toned expansiveness offered by Rostropovich on the cello. It is good to have Bridge's *Pensiero* and *Allegro appassionato* again on disc in strongly characterised performances. Elsewhere, Outram is more duskily brooding in Britten's *Elegy* than his Naxos counterpart and favours more keenly contrasted tempi in the variations of the powerful *Lachrymae*, though it is Jones who taps into its richly coloured eloquence. His Naxos recital seems to me the more valuable disc for its programme but the Nimbus has its own logic for those who like the pairing of Bridge and Britten. **Richard Fairman**

Campbell

Things You Already Know

Members of the St Paul Chamber Orchestra,

Minnesota Orchestra, Zoo Animal and

Aaron & The Sea

Innova © INNOVA860 (34' • DDD)

Also available on © INNOVA861



'Personal music demands personal music tools,' writes the American composer

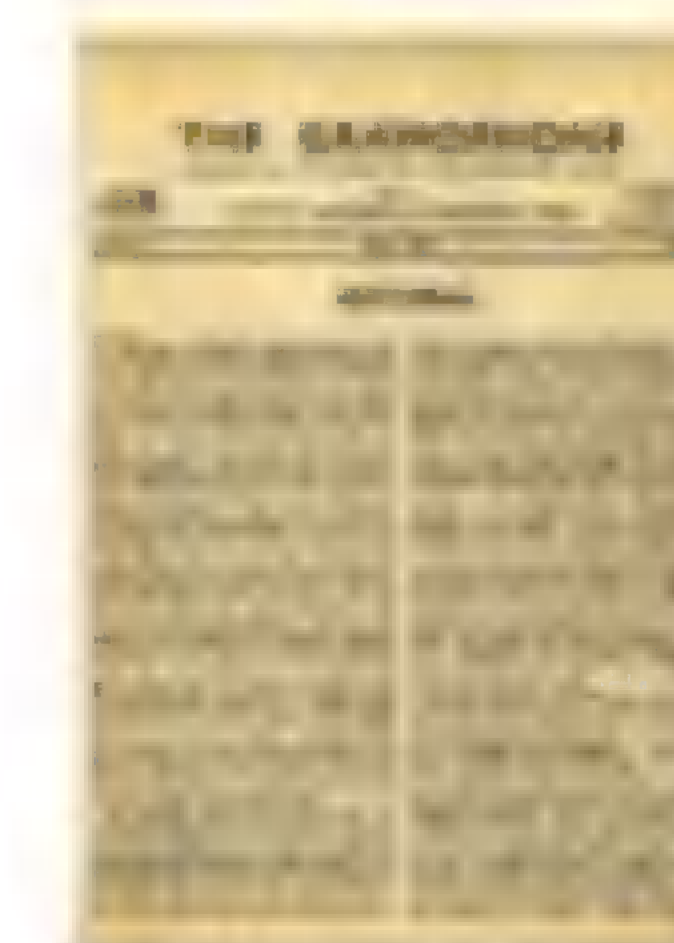
Chris Campbell as he outlines how his new album pulls together orchestral musicians from the Saint Paul Chamber and Minnesota orchestras with players from the rock bands Zoo Animal and Aaron & The Sea – and a bunch of home-made instruments like propane tank drums, singing bowls and psalteries wired up with contact microphones.

This one-off hybrid ensemble has been convened for a project called *Things You Already Know*. Presumably that is meant to raise a wry smile; but thankfully there is nothing flippant or casual about this crossing over of musicians from different disciplines. The music pre-existed in his imagination and its composition, Campbell explains, was partly about defining the right combination of players to make those sounds best function and resonate. This, we're told, is a comment on 21st-century living: 'How do you bring that integrated, non-dual state of mind into the messy reality we live in?'

GRAMOPHONE Archive

Brahms's Clarinet Quintet

Three recordings that came before Martin Fröst's – and how Gramophone rated them



MAY 1938

Brahms Clarinet Quintet, Op 115

Reginald Kell *cl* **Busch** *Qt*

HMV © DB3383/6

Perhaps some people may consider Mr Kell's restraint

excessive, but I shall not agree with them.

Where his instrument is scored for as part of the ensemble the ordinary listener might not even detect it was playing, so merged into the prevailing string tone is it. But where it has to dominate the artist is not found wanting. His approach is always thoroughly romantic, and rightly so. As for the slow movement, I can only say that it seems to me that no more beautiful and moving record exists in the whole range of recorded musical literature.

Alec Robertson



MARCH 1954

Brahms Clarinet Quintet, Op 115

Leopold Wlach *cl*

Vienna Konzerthaus *Qt*

Nixa © WLP5155 (12in • 36s 5½d)

Brahms Clarinet Quintet, Op 115

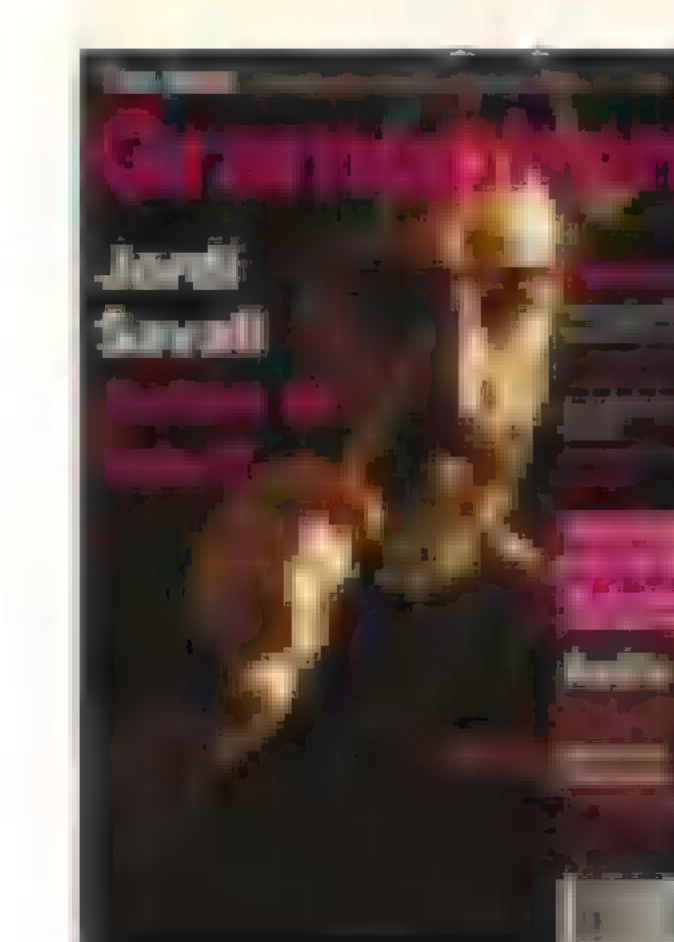
Alfred Boskovsky *cl*

Members of the Vienna Octet

Decca © LXT2858 (12in • 36s 5½d)

Leopold Wlach is in good form. Rather less so the strings; they do not always achieve a perfect ensemble and in the slow movement their muted tone is most curious. In the new Decca, however, we have a version that notably eases the recommendation problem; surely few people will be disappointed with this lovely disc. It has, I think, one fault: the clarinet is nearly always too distant in relation to the strings. This, then, must surely be the general first choice. But even so it should not reasonably be allowed to eclipse Kell's superlative playing.

Malcolm Macdonald



AUGUST 1997

Brahms Clarinet Quintet, Op 115

Karl Leister *cl* **Brandis** *Qt*

Nimbus © NI5515 (67' • DDD)

Karl Leister and the **Brandis**

Quartet amble through Brahms's Clarinet Quintet as if they've spent a lifetime in each other's company, and as members of the Berlin Philharmonic they have. Their pooled tone is warm and generous, their phrasing unhurried and Nimbus's sound quality is appropriately intimate.

Rob Cowan

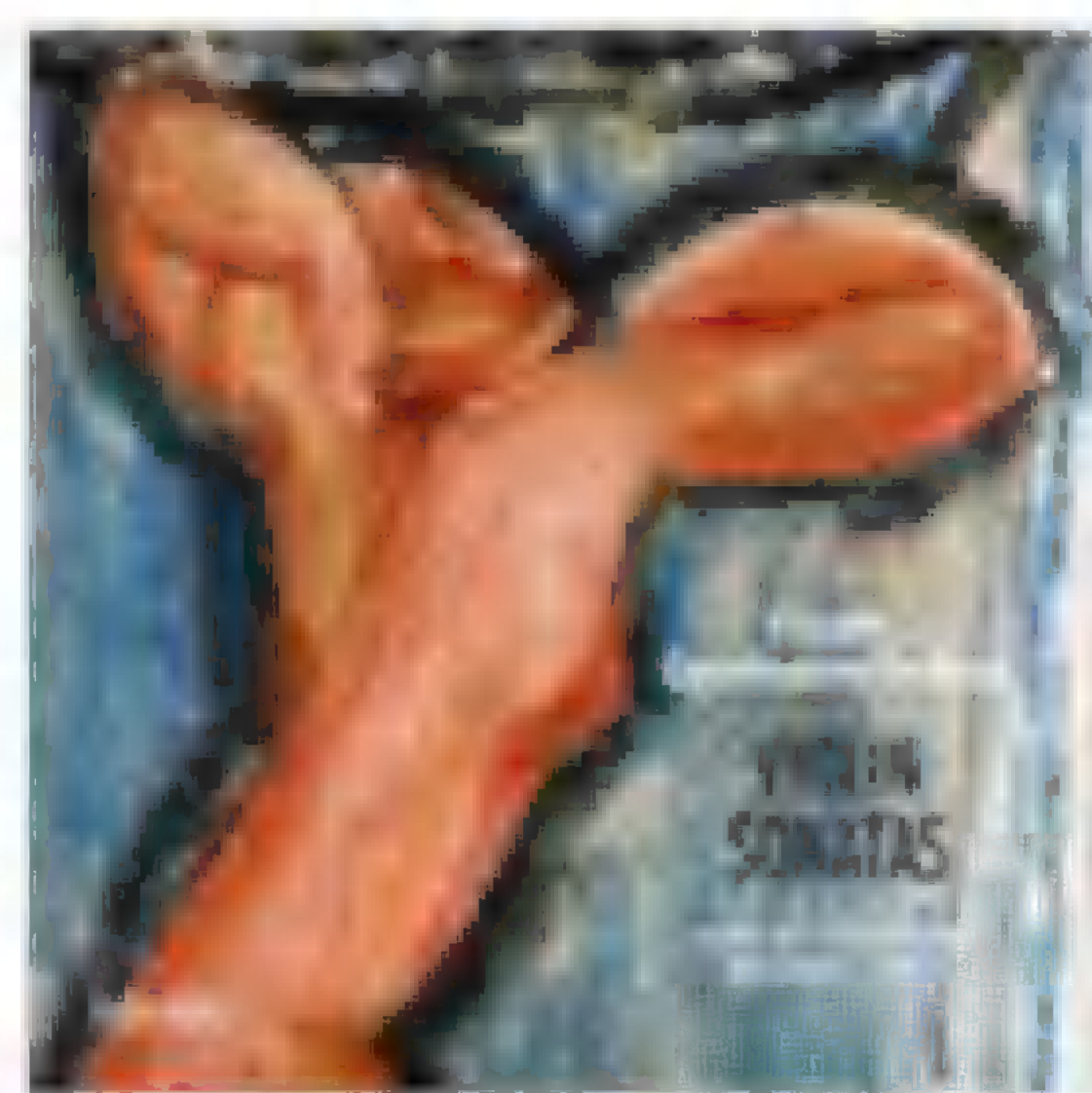
Read articles in full at the Gramophone Archive: for more information, visit gramophone.co.uk

The result is an album that might well sound like everything you already know if Campbell hadn't taken so much care to keep contrasted layers at arm's length – elements allowed to co-exist rather than blending. The opening track, 'Form = Emptiness', doesn't add up to much more than a bare-bones sequence of triads played on an electric keyboard but turns out to be a mere prologue to the main action of 'Lord Byron', an astutely assembled montage that operates by setting up expectations it enjoys upsetting. Chugging lower strings put you in mind of classic minimalism but Campbell's slightly hysterical, definitely romantic cello theme would surely make Steve Reich baulk; and just as this theme is about to hit its melodic climax, Campbell floods our senses with dense layers of noise antithetical to both minimalism and post-Romantic doodling.

Psychedelic rock – think Jefferson Airplane, The Byrds, the Grateful Dead – is the troublemaking ghost in this compositional machine, the druggy, distancing smoke that allows Campbell to pull off his compositional sleights of hand. Even a track such as 'Water Variations', which features home-made instruments zig-zagging around a strait-laced melodic line, eventually spins out of control and gets sucked into this surreal (or super-real?) vortex. The cover art features a man standing with a boat on his head – this music sounds like that. **Philip Clark**

Castelnuovo-Tedesco • Pizzetti

Castelnuovo-Tedesco Sonata quasi una fantasia, Op 56. Tre Vocalizzi, Op 55 (arr Corti)
Pizzetti Violin Sonata. Tre Canti
Hagai Shaham *vn* **Arnon Erez** *pf*
Hyperion © CDA67869 (69') • DDD



The Italy of the 1920s was not a good place to be. Luckily, though, jazz was starting to enjoy some popularity, despite the overarching and perennial cultural influence of opera and, more importantly, the disapproval of the burgeoning Fascist government, who thought it too anarchic (and foreign). Cinema, less unacceptable, was also at the start of its life and both media provided Italy with some sense of release and comfort.

So, with that in mind, Pizzetti and Castelnuovo-Tedesco represent more than meets the ear in Italian music of the period. Pizzetti was never involved in opera – a rarity among Italian composers of any

period – and, like Castelnuovo-Tedesco, displayed a great interest in film. There is a rash of obvious sentimentality in his music, particularly in the Sonata in A and even further in its second movement (the emotively titled 'Preghiera per gl'innocenti'), but it can easily be forgiven, and not only under the terms that it is Italian or that all its substance resides in the melody line. Its value lies in its foreshadowing not only the more progressive music of his pupil Castelnuovo-Tedesco that is present on this disc, but so much of the unique tradition of Italian cinema and its music.

There is more to the propriety of Hagai Shaham as an interpreter of this music than meets the ear as well. His warmth of tone, expressivity and instinctive feel for melody, time and pace all suit this music beautifully and create a performance that arguably even has more depth and appeal than it strictly deserves. **Caroline Gill**

Corelli

'Church Sonatas'

Trio Sonatas – Op 1; Op 3

Avison Ensemble / Pavlo Beznosiuk *vn*

Linn © ② CKD411 (147') • DDD/DSD



This double set completes the Avison Ensemble's survey of Corelli's published opuses. Both of these Roman publications contain 12 trio sonatas apiece, and the majority of them adhere to the structure of the so-called *sonata da chiesa* (ie slow-fast-slow-fast), hence the Avison Ensemble's title of 'Church Sonatas' – although the original editions do not actually call any of them *sonata da chiesa* and the formula does not necessarily mean Corelli envisaged them for ecclesiastical surroundings.

Corelli's dedication of Op 1 (1681) to his patron, the exiled Queen Christina of Sweden, calls these sonatas 'the first fruits of my study'. They are invested with an exquisite sense of harmonic balance by violinists Pavlo Beznosiuk and Caroline Balding, supported with tasteful delicacy by Richard Tunnicliffe (cello), Paula Chateauneuf (archlute) and Roger Hamilton (organ). The Avison Ensemble excel at the madrigalian counterpoint, perfect proportions and lyrical taste evident in the slow introductions to No 3 and No 12, whereas the *Vivace* first movement of the fourth sonata is elegantly alert. Tunnicliffe's shading of the basso continuo line has the perfect amount of chiaroscuro in the penultimate *Allegro* of No 5, whereas

Chateauneuf's dexterously articulated archlute takes centre stage for the rolling bass-line of the *Allegro* in No 8. Dance forms such as the sarabande-style *Adagio* of No 9 are judged beautifully, although Beznosiuk and Balding's conversational bowing also captures the muscular shock of chromatic falling figures in the second movement of No 11.

Op 3 (1689) was dedicated to Duke Francesco II d'Este of Modena. The interplay between the five players is marvellously intuitive, such as the lean *Presto* that concludes No 4. On rare occasions Hamilton switches to a harpsichord for the sake of textural variety, such as the crispness it gives to the *allegros* in No 2 – although the highlight, as so often in Op 3, is the slow third movement (likewise, the *largos* of No 3 and No 8 are sublime). Any hint that these conscientious musicians might have merely motored through all 24 sonatas formulaically is contradicted by this classy conclusion to their distinguished Corellian project.

David Vickers

Danzi

'Music for Piano and Winds, Vol 1'

Clarinet Sonata, Op 54. Horn Sonata, Op 28.

Quintet, Op 41

ensemble F2

Devine Music © DMCD002 (80') • DDD



Ensemble F2's project, prepared last year for Finchcocks Musical Museum in Kent, explores the chamber music of Franz Danzi (1763-1826). A versatile musician who joined the famous Mannheim court orchestra at the age of only 15, he replaced his father as the orchestra's principal cellist after the court relocated to Munich; in 1798 he was promoted to the position of vice-Kapellmeister, but after some setbacks he worked in Stuttgart (where he befriended Weber and Spohr) before settling in Karlsruhe.

His Quintet in D minor for fortepiano, oboe, clarinet, horn and bassoon (Op 41) was published in Leipzig in 1810, although he simultaneously issued a version for strings (Op 40). The brooding yet beguiling sonority of the *Larghetto* opening features softly sustained chords that are immaculately balanced by James Eastaway (oboe), Jane Booth (clarinet), Ursula Leveaux (bassoon) and Anneke Scott (horn); all are on scintillating form in this masterfully crafted and elegantly dramatic music. ▶

GRAMOPHONE *Collector*

BRAHMS'S VIOLIN SONATAS

Duncan Druce compares four duos in brand new recordings of Johannes Brahms's three sonatas for violin and piano – and more



Yuja Wang makes 'the most complex passages beautifully clear' in Brahms's sonatas with Leonidas Kavakos

The three Brahms sonatas have distinct, strongly differentiated characters, their variety offering a considerable challenge to performers. With Brahms there's no single, correct interpretation; his scores are full of suggestions to his players but he never appears absolutely prescriptive. There are no metronome marks but frequent pointers to style and expression. *Sotto voce*, *tranquillo*, *espressivo*, *con anima* and many other indications take the performer into his world, yet leave room for individual decisions.

The third movement of No 3 in D minor, Op 108, is marked *Un poco presto e con sentimento*. Most duos play this piece with a light touch, giving it an elfin character, but **Jana Vonášková-Nováková** and **Irina Kondratenko** give us less *presto* and more *sentimento*, imparting a melancholy air to the music. The final page of this movement is marked *tranquillo*; **Corey Cerovsek** and **Paavali Jumppanen** interpret this as an invitation to slacken the tempo, giving the sense of sadness, hitherto hovering in the background, a more decisive expression.

Sometimes, however, performers appear to contradict Brahms's express intentions. The finale of No 1 in G, Op 78, based on the song 'Regenlied', is marked *Allegro molto moderato*, with light textures and *p* and *pp* dynamics predominating. Vonášková-Nováková and Kondratenko treat it as an anxious, overtly passionate

utterance, hardly *molto moderato* and often considerably louder than the dynamics suggest. **Catherine Manoukian** and **Gunilla Süssmann**, too, allow the dynamic level to creep up – even when the music is marked *pp* for several bars. **Leonidas Kavakos** and **Yuja Wang** show the way, their expression precisely tailored to the expressive curves clearly shown in the score.

Wang and Kavakos give consistently outstanding performances. Wang has a way of making even the most complex passages beautifully clear. Without over-emphasising turning points in the harmony, she's able to point the music's direction of travel, often simply by stressing a particular pitch in a chord. When she allows herself greater freedom, her *rubato* gives an air of improvisation. Kavakos similarly delights in finding an ideal expression for each phrase: of the four violinists heard on these discs, he shows by far the widest range of tone colours. I'm impressed that he saves a more passionate tone for phrases marked *espressivo* (for example in the *Andante* sections of the middle movement of No 2 in A, Op 100), giving voice to the music's emotional character in a way that continuous intensity would destroy.

One aspect of Kavakos's playing I'd question is his habit of articulating notes within a single bow where Brahms has marked a *legato* slur. A comparison with Cerovsek, on the opening page of Op 78, for instance, reveals the beauty of a true

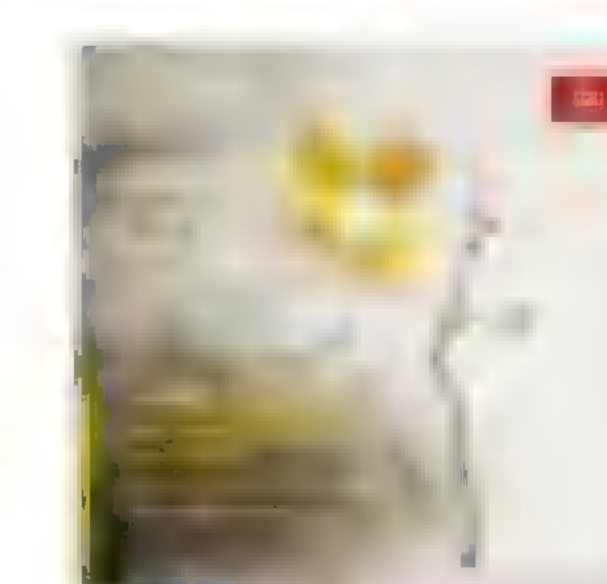
legato for the descending chains of quavers. Jumppanen and Cerovsek give a thoughtful, sympathetic account of the sonatas, with Jumppanen a fluent and enthusiastic pianist and Cerovsek boasting an unforced, natural style. The tendency is towards pushing the music on, occasionally sounding a little hurried but resulting in a delightfully animated first movement in Op 100, and culminating in a thrilling account of the galloping *Presto* finale of Op 108.

Manoukian and Süssmann offer large-scale, strongly projected performances, generously recorded. Their playing boasts warm, spontaneous expression and rhythmic energy but I'm often troubled that they ignore Brahms's instructions to play quietly. Manoukian is unable to resist a full tone on the wonderful G-string melodies in Op 100's finale and Op 108's *Adagio*, both marked *piano*, and the start of Op 108 is far from *sotto voce*. Manoukian's continuous vibrato makes for an impressively resonant tone but impedes variety of expression. In Op 108's third movement, the duo show they can play with true delicacy; it's a shame this doesn't happen more often.

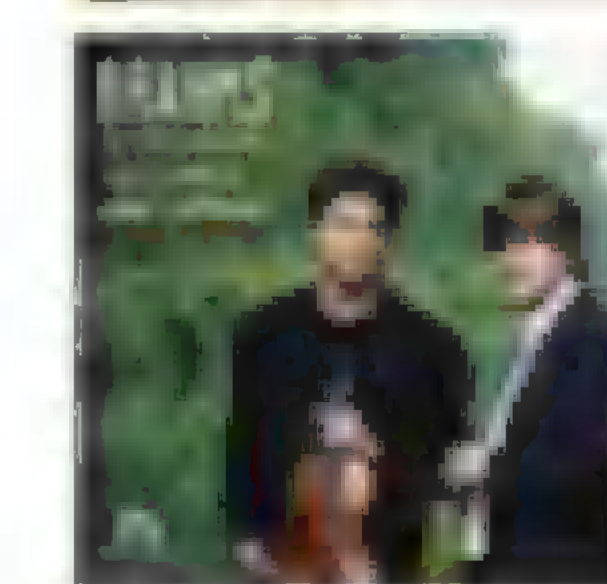
The two Brahms sonatas on Vonášková-Nováková and Kondratenko's disc provide some excellent individual movements alongside one or two more contentious interpretations. But the main interest of the issue, perhaps, lies with the collaborative 'FAE' Sonata. These players give an especially strong, convincing performance of Albert Dietrich's spacious opening *Allegro* but Schumann's finale is better served by the less insistent, smoother playing of Carolin Widmann and Denes Várjon (ECM, A/08).

I can't wholeheartedly recommend the Supraphon or the Berlin Classics discs. Cerovsek and Jumppanen, thoughtful and full of interest, are well worth investigating, while Kavakos and Wang are outstanding in almost every way. **G**

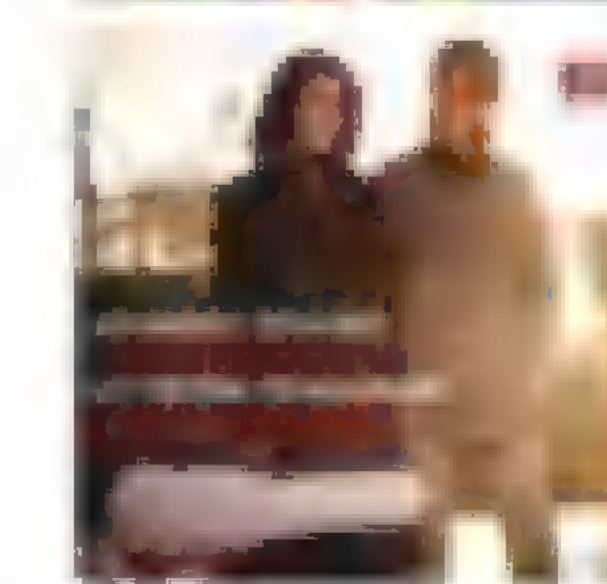
THE RECORDINGS



Brahms Vn Sons Nos 1 & 3. 'FAE' Sonata
Vonášková-Nováková, Kondratenko
Supraphon © SU4170-2



Brahms Vn Sons Nos 1-3
Cerovsek, Jumppanen
Milanollo © 700261 395722



Brahms Vn Sons Nos 1-3. 'FAE' Scherzo
Manoukian, Süssmann
Berlin Classics © 0300567BC



Brahms Vn Sons Nos 1-3. 'FAE' Scherzo
Kavakos, Wang
Decca © 478 6442DH **G** **G**

Steven Devine's supple fortepiano contributions are flawlessly lyrical, but in the Turkish-style *Rondo allegretto* conclusion to the Sonata in E flat major for fortepiano and horn (Op 28) he makes astonishing use of 'Janissary band' special effects (bells, crashing cymbal, drum and bassoon imitations), operated by an additional pedal and knee lever of a Fritz grand piano (c1815); Scott's enthralling natural horn-playing takes no prisoners either. Devine's alert sensitivity and Booth's *cantabile* expressiveness form a fine partnership in the Sonata in B flat for fortepiano and clarinet (Op 54). This is a wonderful match of interesting repertoire and classy musicianship. **David Vickers**

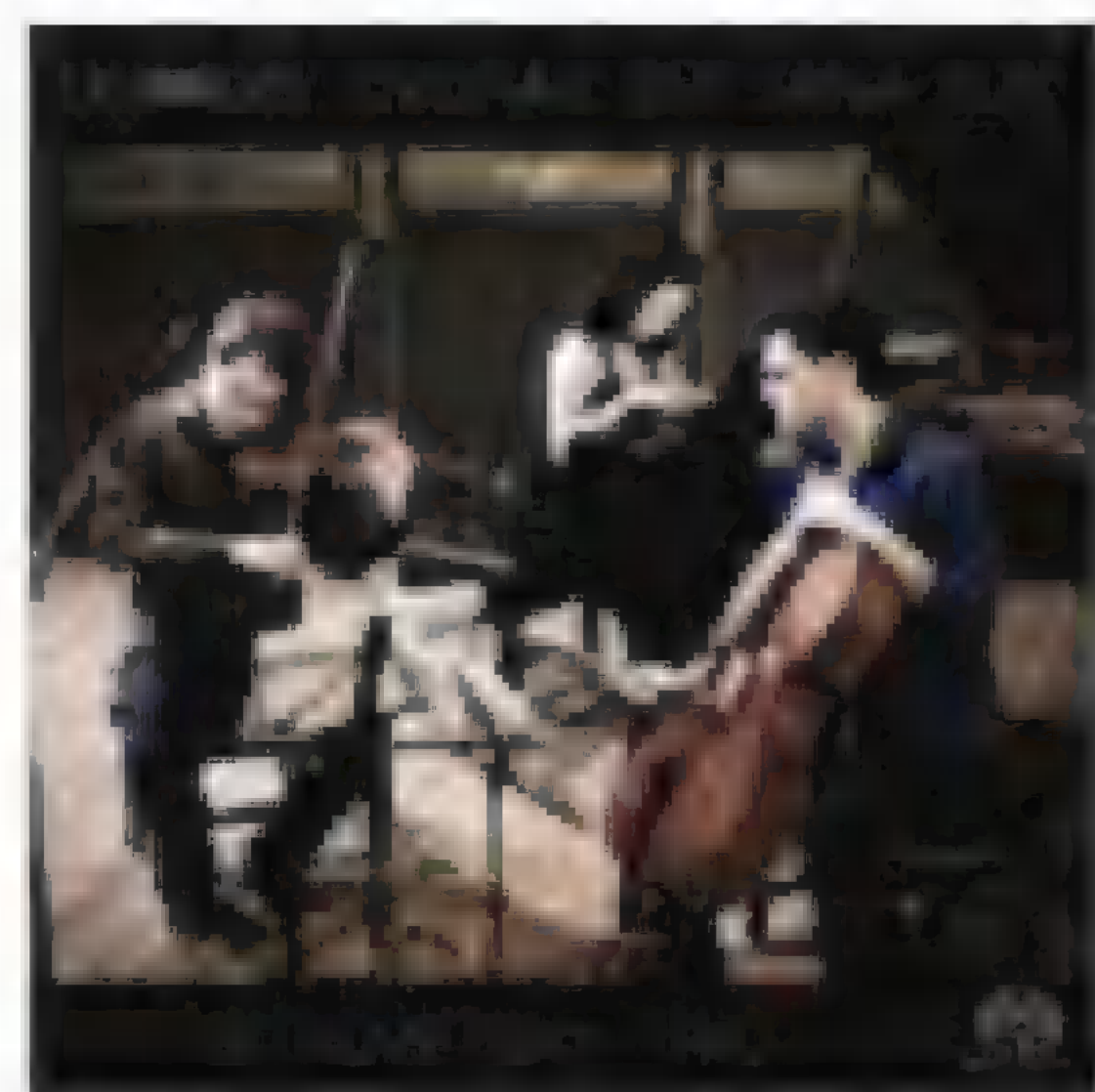
Dvořák · Smetana · Suk

Dvořák Piano Trio No 3, Op 65 B130

Smetana Piano Trio, Op 15 **Suk** Elegy, Op 23

Sitkovetsky Trio

BIS (F) BIS2059 (73' • DDD)



Smetana's G minor Trio has one of the grandest openings in the entire piano

trio repertoire, its Lisztian axis much underlined by the Feininger Trio, whose recording, like the one under review, is coupled with piano trios by Dvořák and Josef Suk. The two performances are quite unlike, the Feiningers centring more on rhetoric, the Sitkovetsky Trio on intimacy: note, for example, pianist Wu Qian's winning lilt in the second-movement *Allegro*. Both here and in the finale the trio's string-players – violinist Alexander Sitkovetsky and cellist Leonard Elschenbroich – make the very most of Smetana's luscious melodies, 'earworms' of the first order. Theirs is a class act and whether you opt for them may well be down to their choice of couplings.

The Sitkovetsky Trio choose Suk's moving Elegy of 1902, composed as a memorial tribute for the author Julius Zeyer, whereas the Feininger Trio treat us to the more substantial Piano Trio in C minor, Op 2. They also select as their programme centrepiece one of Dvořák's less familiar trios, No 2 in G minor, whereas the Sitkovetskys tackle the finest of the trios, No 3 in F minor, Op 65, a work that, with its sizeable structure and volatile emotional language, levels with the most imposing of the symphonies. Here a viable comparison is on Harmonia Mundi with violinist Isabelle Faust, cellist Jean-Guihen Queyras and pianist Alexander Melnikov, more keenly inflected and at times more

sonorous than the Sitkovetskys, who, as in the Smetana, favour a more reserved manner of dialogue. Be sure not to dismiss the Suk Trio's Dvořák (Supraphon) from the running. They are in a class of their own; but the present release is excellent and the sound quality is first-rate.

Rob Cowan

Smetana – selected comparison:

Feininger Trio (5/14) (AVI) AVI8553293

Dvořák – selected comparison:

Suk Trio (9/01) (SUPR) SU3545-2

Faust, Queyras, Melnikov (11/04) (HARM) HMC90 1833

Fauré

'Works for Violin and Piano'

Violin Sonatas – No 1, Op 13; No 2, Op 108.

Andante, Op 75. Berceuse, Op 16.

Morceau de lecture. Romance, Op 28

Daishin Kashimoto *vn* **Eric Le Sage** *pf*

Alpha (F) ALPHA604 (68' • DDD)



Daishin Kashimoto makes his second appearance in Eric Le Sage's Fauré series,

this time taking centre stage. He's a persuasive advocate of the First Violin Sonata: tempi are apt and he conveys its emotional ebb and flow to good effect. Only in the slow movement did doubts arise: others, not least Faust and Boffard, are more intimate, more rapt. But the fingery third movement works well – better than Dalberto in the Capuçon recording (which is in any case compromised by its boomy acoustic). In the finale, they play up Fauré's lyricism, though I find Faust and Boffard even more compelling, their greater simplicity proving very potent.

Forty years separate the First from the Second Sonata, which dates from 1916. But there's no discernible change in approach from Kashimoto and Le Sage. That disturbing opening violin phrase ('shooting out...like a flame from among the ashes', as Jean-Michel Nectoux so memorably put it) doesn't have the troubled undertones that others reveal, and every opportunity for a soaring late-Romantic phrase is lovingly seized upon. I prefer their approach to the slow movement, though Faust is still more affecting.

The remaining pieces work better, particularly the flowing Berceuse and the *Morceau de lecture*, which is played with a caressing tenderness. I like, too, the conversational tone of Deborah Nemtanu's Berceuse in its orchestral garb (Mirare, 5/13), while the clarity that Faust finds in the same work gets straight to the heart of the matter.

Alpha's series of Fauré has generally been very fine; if this is not up with its finest offerings, it's still a worthwhile addition if you're collecting the series. But to my mind Faust, with exactly the same repertoire, is clearly preferable. **Harriet Smith**

Selected comparisons – coupled as above:

Faust, Boffard (10/02) (HARM) HMC90 1741

R Capuçon, Dalberto, Angelich (12/11) (VIRG) 070875-2

Glerup

Divertimento^a. *dust encapsulated* –

#1 (counting is OK)^b; #2^c. *objets/décalages*^d.

Sonata in Seven Movements^e

^aNeel Bramsnæs Teilmann *pf*

^bMatthias Friis-Hansen *perc* ^dGáman; ^{ac}Athelas

Sinfonietta Copenhagen / Pierre-André Valade

Dacapo Open Space (F) 8 226578 (49' • DDD)



Rune Glerup (*b*1981) is a young Danish composer of whom there are high hopes

for the future in his native country. He studied in Berlin and at IRCAM rather than the Royal Danish Academy and this shows in the cosmopolitan side of his music. The pieces on this debut CD reminded me a touch of the early works of Magnus Lindberg – in which case Glerup has a glittering career ahead of him, indeed.

The brilliant trio *objets/décalages* ('objects/displacements', 2008) for recorder, violin and accordion is typical of his compositions, constructed as a series of mosaics that seem to define a physical space. Glerup is quoted in the booklet as saying how the locality of the first performance helps him create the final work and this can determine the spatial disposition of the performers. In the title-tracks, an additional visual stimulus came from a Man Ray photograph of a Marcel Duchamp artwork: *dust encapsulated #1* (counting is OK) (2008-09) for percussion and live electronics is a compelling duo for the analogue and the digital. The Piano Sonata (2011) is a reinvention of the form, turning its elements inside out; he has perhaps not yet learnt to knit them back together yet.

Not everything comes off, quite: *dust encapsulated #2* (2009), a quintet for flute, clarinet, violin, cello and piano, is too complex for its own good and sounds a lot like a lot of other pieces. The Divertimento for sinfonietta (2010-11) was originally *dust encapsulated #3* but has undergone a number of changes and lost its title in the process. Performances and recordings are excellent, mostly by the players for whom they were written. Definitely a talent to watch.

Guy Rickards



The Sitkovetsky Trio, focusing on intimacy in volatile, melancholy and luscious piano trios by Czech composers

Grieg • Lidholm • Sibelius

'Nordic Cello Soul'

Grieg Cello Sonata, Op 36. Intermezzo.

Allegretto (arr from Violin Sonata, Op 45)

Lidholm Four Pieces **Sibelius** Andantino.

Andantino molto. Tempo di valse, 'Lulu Waltz'.

Theme and Variations

Hampus Linderholm *vc* **Mats Jansson** *pf*

Sterling © CDA1688-2 (75' • DDD)



The rather curious title here, 'Nordic Cello Soul', covers widely diverse music

by three Nordic composers. The pair of opening Andantinos by Sibelius (written in 1884 and 1887 respectively) are gentle and eloquent, the first a simple melancholy song-like tune 'influenced by Grieg', suggests the pianist, Mats Jansson. The second is more ambitious and in ternary form.

The *Lulu Waltz* is very brief but charming. Then comes the finest work of the four, the Theme and Variations, also from 1887 but more mature and demanding considerable virtuosity from the cellist. All four pieces were written for the composer's brother, whose obvious skills

are mirrored here by the sensitive playing of Hampus Linderholm partnered by the excellent Mats Jansson.

However, when they enter the enticing melodic world of Grieg, the Nordic feeling is more striking. Not so much in the early (1867) Intermezzo in A minor but certainly in the lovely and highly characteristic Allegretto, arranged from the Third Violin Sonata (1887), showing the composer in full melodic flow. The Cello Sonata, written in the same year, opens with a vigorous *Allegro agitato* but has a winning secondary theme, matched by the delightful following *Andante molto tranquillo*. The finale dances off with vivacious Nordic vigour. This work shows both artists at their finest; indeed, the performance is superb.

I found the aggressive opening *Robusto* of Lidholm's *Four Pieces* very appealing, and the second piece, *Fantastico*, is hardly *molto tranquillo*. But the performance (like everything else in the programme) is first-class and the recording very real.

Ivan March

Haydn • Prokofiev • Shostakovich

'Postcard from Nalchik'

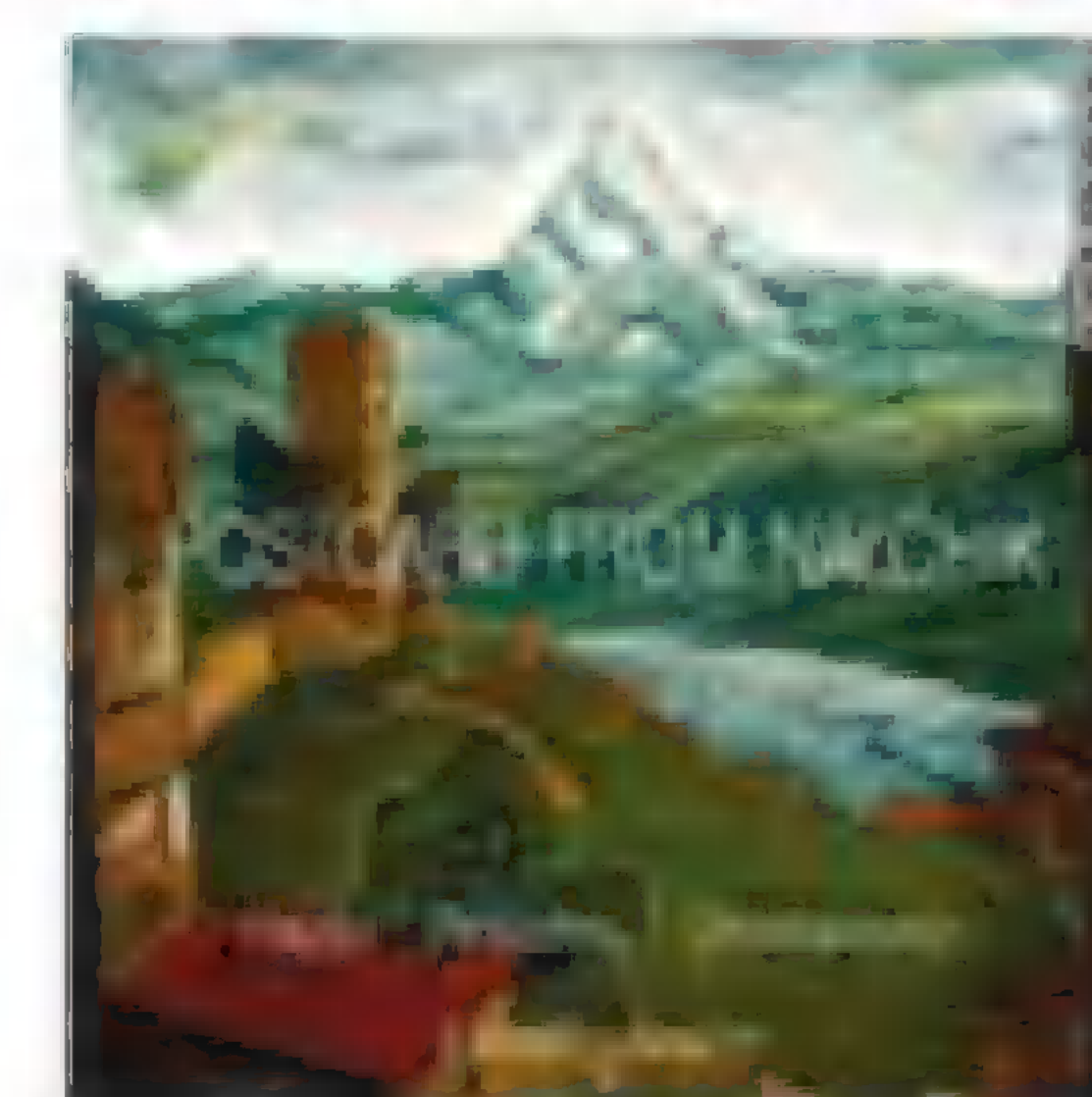
Haydn String Quartet, 'Joke', Op 33 No 2

Prokofiev String Quartet No 2, Op 92

Shostakovich String Quartet No 8, Op 110

Edinburgh Quartet

Delphian © DCD34081 (60' • DDD)



The Edinburgh Quartet's finely matched sound and firm sense of rhythm

lead to a splendid performance of the Haydn. It's a shame the first movement's second repeat is missing, and I could wish that the *Scherzo* had more the feel of one-in-a-bar; otherwise Haydn's inspired creativity is given full expression, with the serious parts as strongly portrayed as the lively, humorous passages.

In the Prokofiev, it's not easy to find a style that successfully marries the work's dissonant harmonies with its straightforward folk melodies. I feel the Pavel Haas Quartet, with their richer tone, more sustained style and more extreme dynamic range, achieve this more successfully than the present recording does. However, there's much to be said for the Edinburgh Quartet's refined approach to the *Adagio*, emphasising its spare, open sound and wistful melancholy.

The Shostakovich is a gift to any group with a sense of drama and able to project its powerful contrasts, and this performance certainly doesn't disappoint. I'm impressed by the way these players have worked to produce the precise sound to transmit the emotional import of each phrase. This is especially noticeable in the first movement; by comparison, even the Emerson Quartet appear just to employ a 'normal' range of tone, slightly masking the music's rawness and individuality. The second movement is incisive and uncompromising, and its *Allegretto* continuation manages to combine the skittishness of the music's surface with the underlying atmosphere of fear and dread. **Duncan Druce**

Prokofiev – selected comparison:

Parvet Haas Qt (3/10) (SUPR) SU3957-2

Shostakovich – selected comparison:

Emerson Qt (6/00th) (DG) 475 7407DC5

Mahler • Strauss

Mahler Piano Quartet. Erinnerung^a. Wo die schönen Trompeten blasen^a R Strauss Piano Quartet, Op 13. Acht Lieder aus letzte Blätter^a, Op 10 – No 1, Zueignung; No 3, Die Nacht; No 8, Allerseelen. Vier Lieder^a, Op 27 – No 2, Cäcilie; No 3, Heimliche Aufforderung; No 4, Morgen (^aarr Zöllner)

^a**Simone Kermes sop Fauré Quartet**

Sony Classical © 88843 02367-2 (77' • DDD)



In ways more subtle in scale but no less carefully provocative than orchestral

recordings by Norrington and Zinman, this recording asks us to redefine what we think we mean by Romantic performance values. The Fauré Quartet is well named for its deceptive (a young German ensemble) and elusive approach to Mahler's teenage stab at a piano quartet movement, apparently slow and relaxed at first, boldly distinguishing the three thematic groups with the historically informed application of *rubato* and *portamento*, a new century away from the good, solid, Brahmsian sense of Domus's recording.

Vibrato and *legato* are hardly less sparingly applied in their mercurial performance of Strauss's more complete, more fluent but hardly less jejune Piano Quartet, written when he was all of 20. The extra time afforded to each movement by Wolfgang Sawallisch and friends draws a more familiar Straussian portrait, more vocal and relaxed, less tied to the Classical principles of rhetoric that Brahms so prized. In place of their *gemütlich* charm and earthy Bavarian weight, the Fauré

Quartet's mercurial *Scherzo* is haunted by neurotic fragments and pauses.

Is this the Strauss of 1884, of 1944 or of 2014? The question may become more pressing for many listeners with a selection of much-loved Lieder, sung by Simone Kermes with a cabaret-style intimacy that well suits these arrangements by Dietrich Zöllner for the ensemble at hand. For the sprung rhythms and white notes of 'Cäcilie' Kermes brings her expertise as a Vivaldi singer, which not everyone will count as a gain. Strauss and Mahler could hardly have known a voice like it, though Elisabeth Schumann might be considered a distant cousin, and the bitter ironies of 'Wo die schönen Trompeten blasen' make an ideal match for the knowing naïveté of Kermes and the quartet, as dry and refreshing as a decent martini. **Peter Quanttrill**

Mahler Pf Qt – selected comparison:

Domus (1/89th) (VIRG) 561615-2

Strauss Pf Qt – selected comparison:

Sawallisch et al (3/97th) (BRIL) 9231

Mancini

'Solos for a Flute'

Recorder Sonatas – No 1; No 2;

No 4; No 5; No 6; No 10; No 11; No 12

Gwyn Roberts recs/II Tempesta di Mare

Chandos Chaconne © CHAN0801 (68' • DDD)



Francesco Mancini (1672-1737) spent all of his working life in his native city of

Naples, notably as Alessandro Scarlatti's successor as director of the Royal Chapel from 1725, but it was in London that his *XII Solos for a Violin or Flute* were published in 1724. Perhaps he had hopes of making a living in that city, so welcoming to Italian musicians, but in the end he never went. Today he is cited as an early member of the Neapolitan school that did so much to push musical language from Baroque to early Classical, but that is perhaps more evident in his operatic and church music than these sonatas, which seem fairly standard mid-Baroque fare.

Standard, but not uniform. Some movements, such as the gigue finale of Sonata No 6, sound like Handel; the first movement of Sonata No 4 sounds like Vivaldi; and the last movement of Sonata No 12 plays triple-time rhythmic games. But although Mancini clearly didn't lack ideas, and his sonatas are skilfully and often gracefully made, I doubt if many will be eager to hear eight of them in one hit – at least, not as presented by Gwyn Roberts and her three colleagues from Philadelphia-

based Tempesta di Mare. For despite that her nimble fingers touch three different recorders and a flute, and that the continuo instrumentarium of keyboards, lutes and cello is dutifully shuffled, there is a lack of variety, wit and sometimes sheer softness that makes this a difficult disc to love.

I can't help feeling that Mancini's sonatas would be better served as part of a mixed anthology, as for instance in Bart Coen's 'The London Flute' (DHM, 9/13) and by being treated to a more sensitive use of phrasing, articulation and dynamics (ditto).

Lindsay Kemp

Mendelssohn

String Quartets – No 2, Op 13; No 3, Op 44 No 1; No 6, Op 80

Artemis Quartet

Erato © 2564 63669-0 (88' • DDD)



Four notes – G sharp, A, F natural and E – opening Beethoven's A minor Quartet,

Op 132, must have intrigued Mendelssohn; but the relationship between the last two, a flattened sixth against a fifth, is an inspiration for Op 13. They are initially heard as a trill on the viola taking the music out of the introductory *Adagio* in A major into the A minor *Allegro vivace* first movement, where these notes appear often, their pattern repeated in other parts in the same key. Yet that *Adagio* also carries references to another inspiration, Mendelssohn's own song 'Ist es wahr?' ('Is it true?'), which he says 'speaks in the whole piece' though is never fully quoted. Hear it speaking compassionately but perhaps not questioningly at the beginning by the Artemis Quartet, who may however catch you unawares by their vehemence in the main section, easing the tempo though for the E minor second subject. And easing much more for the second movement *Adagio non lento*, the D minor fugue in its second section keenly clarified, the A minor third reaching a dramatic climax before the first section returns to close the movement as Beethoven did the Cavatina of his Op 130, four identical chords tied together fading to *pianissimo* – which is also how the work ends.

The Artemis are supreme throughout but so are the Elias Quartet. And the two offer their own insights into Op 80, the rhetorical fury of the first movement and the terseness of the second and finale suggesting Mendelssohn's reaction to the death of his sister, Fanny Hensel. There is little to choose between the groups in these ►



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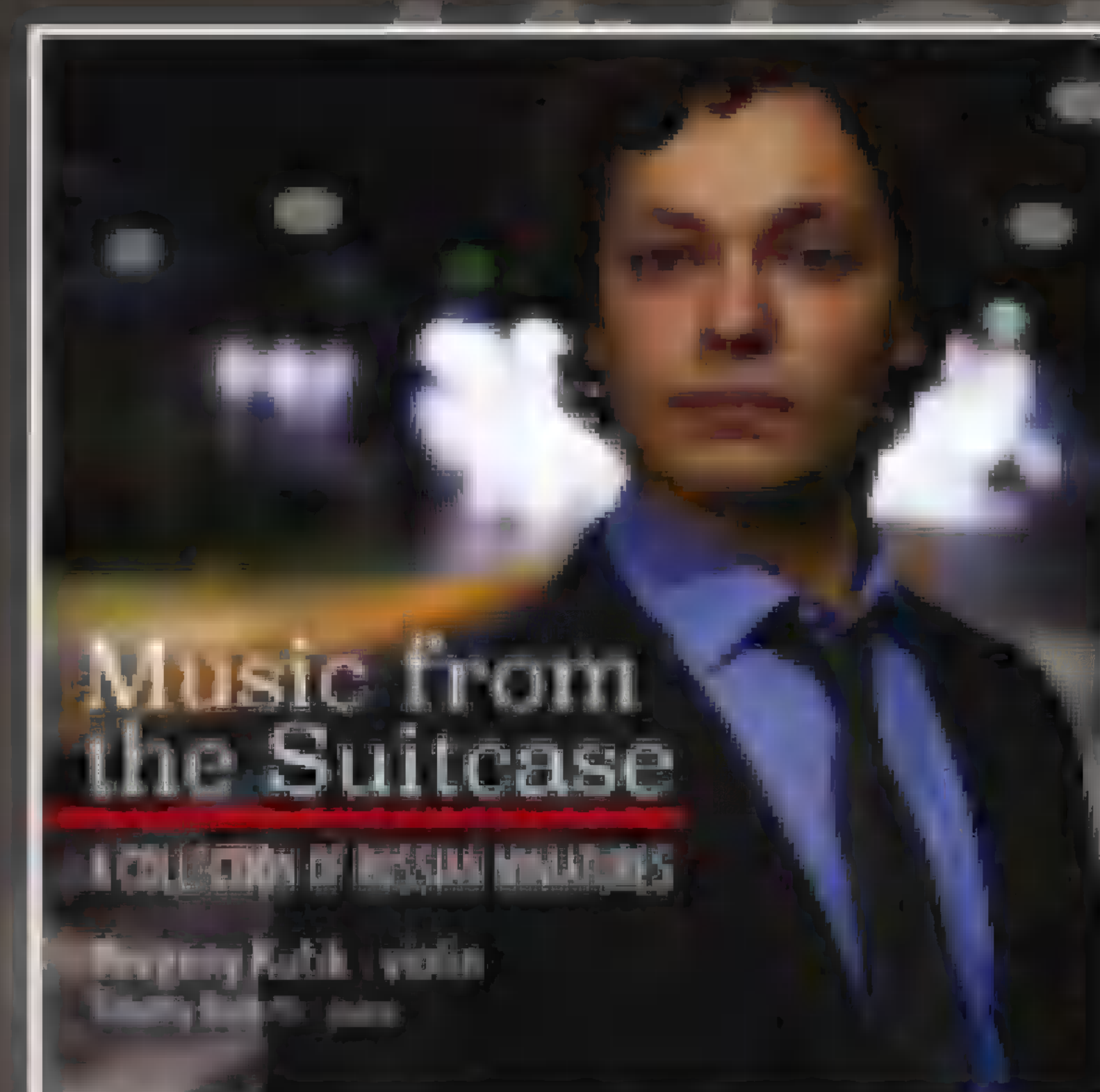
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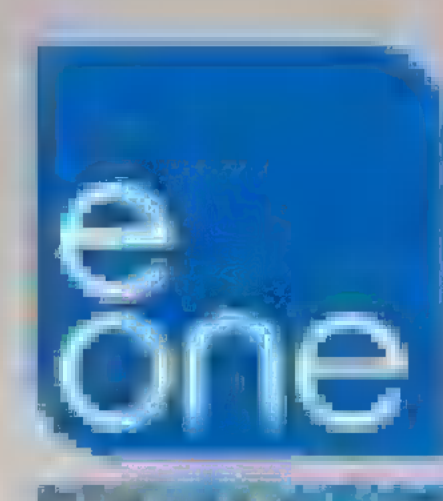
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MODERNIST STRING QUARTETS

Philip Clark listens to new recordings of string quartets by three of the most outspoken and influential modernists of our times



Time travel: thirteen years separate the Juilliard Quartet's recordings of works by Elliott Carter

Paul Desmond, the great jazz saxophonist, once was asked by a dotting fan desperate to engage him in conversation, 'but how many of there are you in the quartet?' – a question which might have been better directed at the composers under discussion here, whose white-canvas view of the string quartet challenges the most fundamental of certainties.

Four players used to mean four lines. Even taking into account the potential for string instruments to stack up double- and triple-stops, escaping from that basic concept is a high-risk strategy, mainly because that's how the harmonic ley lines lie, but also because naysayers will raise inevitable questions about why a model of quartet-writing that sustained everyone from Haydn to Bartók would need any overhauling. Elliott Carter, in his Second and Fifth Quartets, divides the quartet up into sub-groupings in an attempt to shake the inherent 'quartetiness' out of the string quartet; Helmut Lachenmann deconstructs the essentials of string technique down to a palette of micro-sounds that yanks open the compositional terrain.

And **Brian Ferneyhough's** wheeze is to overload listeners with so much information that you think you're listening to a philosophical discourse mapped out in sound about the string quartet of the future as the usual modes of understanding are punctured. The Arditti Quartet have recorded Ferneyhough's string quartets

before but this cycle of his complete music for string quartet – and his 1995 String Trio – has been freshly recorded for the group's 40th anniversary.

Ferneyhough is one of those composers – alongside Xenakis, Carter and Jonathan Harvey – whose music has defined what the Arditti Quartet do, and eavesdropping into how their creative relationship has evolved over 30 years is telling. Written in 1967, *Sonatas for String Quartet* predates Ferneyhough's relationship with the Ardittis, and indeed the quartet itself. The starting point is Webern but with the rider that Ferneyhough shapes 24 miniatures into a structure that can also function as a 40-minute whole. Archetypal string gestures which in the opening sections feel crude and generalised are filled out and combined – and re-combined – as the piece progresses, a structural shading-in that the Ardittis handle with delicate deportment.

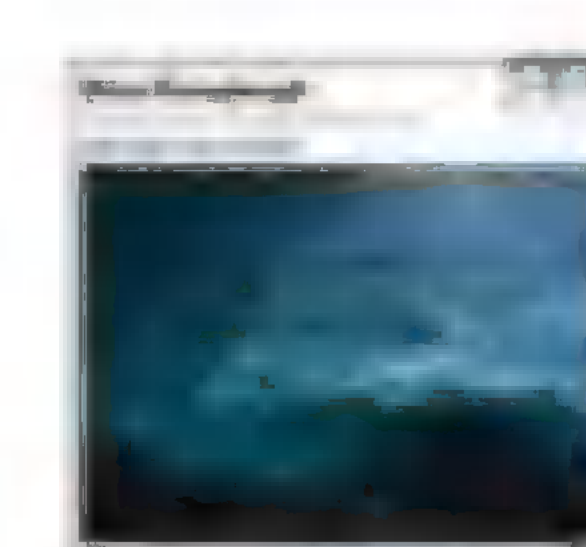
That fragility – breathe too heavily and sounds may well fall apart – of the *Sonatas* carries into the gossamer, fine-grained textures of String Quartet No 2 (1980). Anyone with a journeyman knowledge of his music might be caught short by the first line of his programme note – 'This piece is about silence' – but the paradox identified is characteristic: the stillness at the heart of Ferneyhough's piece can only be appreciated through concentrating on what are described as 'ever-tighter concentric paths' that frame the pockets of silence. The Arditti Quartet operate

skilfully here: isolated notes push towards the outer limits, where they melt away, tinting the air with their absence.

Ferneyhough's models – Webern, Schoenberg and the aftermath of the 12-tone revolution – were where **Elliott Carter** found his art some generations earlier, and comparisons between the two composers are instructive. Ferneyhough steps inside serial methodology to take an objective look at the resultant materials; Carter's First Quartet (1951) sounds like the proud consequence of a 'how-to-generate-an-exemplary-modernist-string-quartet-or-your-money-back' correspondence course. Sony's new release pairs the Juilliard Quartet's 1990s performances of Carter's first four quartets with their first recording, cut last year, of his late-period String Quartet No 5. The Third Quartet – composed in 1971, long before the more settled language of the Fourth and Fifth Quartets took hold – remains the standout moment. Dialogues within the string quartet are rendered spatially specific as a duo of violin and viola battle it out against a second pairing of violin and cello. Often such hopeful concepts crumble because material that is supposed to be dramatically contrasted turns out not to be so. Not here though. Clustered lines and 'will-they-fit' gestures lash out. The piece has a messy, raggedy surface – the gentlemanly small-talk of the Fifth Quartet just can't compete.

In the booklet accompanying Mode's complete **Helmut Lachenmann** string quartets, there's the composer himself, photographed violin in hand, demonstrating to the New York-based JACK Quartet precisely the sound he wants. The opening of Lachenmann's first piece for string quartet, *Gran torso* (1972), a rude and gnarly scraping noise, remains striking because, unlike Carter and, some would say, unlike Ferneyhough, Lachenmann dares to propose that music might not be the whole story. And the JACK Quartet feel their way expertly through this philosophically recalcitrant idea – the raw sounds behind the music can be revealed too. **G**

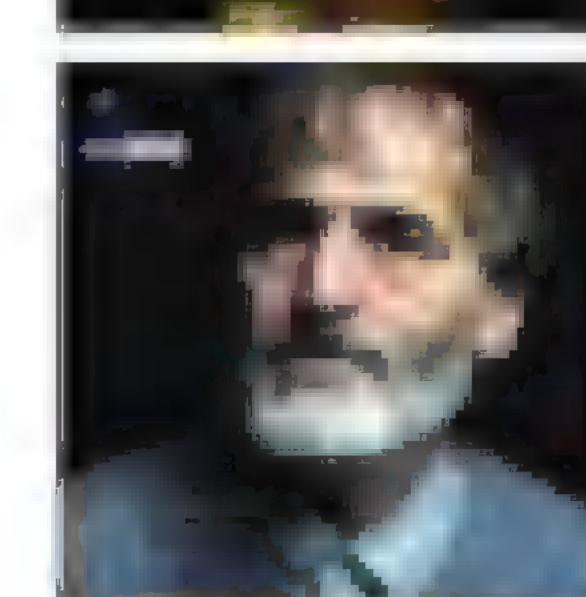
THE RECORDINGS



Ferneyhough Cpte Stg Qts
Arditti Qt
Aeon **M** ③ AECD1335



Carter Five Stg Qts
Juilliard Qt
Sony Classical **B** ② 88843 03383-2



Lachenmann Cpte Stg Qts
JACK Qt
Mode **E** MODE267



The Artemis Quartet, 'supreme throughout' the second string quartet by Felix Mendelssohn on their new Erato disc of three of the composer's quartets

movements; but the *Adagio* touches the Elias to a greater degree, discerning a yearning and tenderness that, in context, is more fitting than the trace of neutrality from the Artemis. The Artemis are consistently superior in Op 44 No 1, the only quartet here with metronome marks, all obeyed, but enticingly within the finest degrees of expressive discrimination. The work not only merits care but gains it from musicians who keep every element of the canvas in their sights. **Nalen Anthoni**

Opp 13 & 80 – selected comparison:
Elias Qt (5/07) (ASV) GLD4025

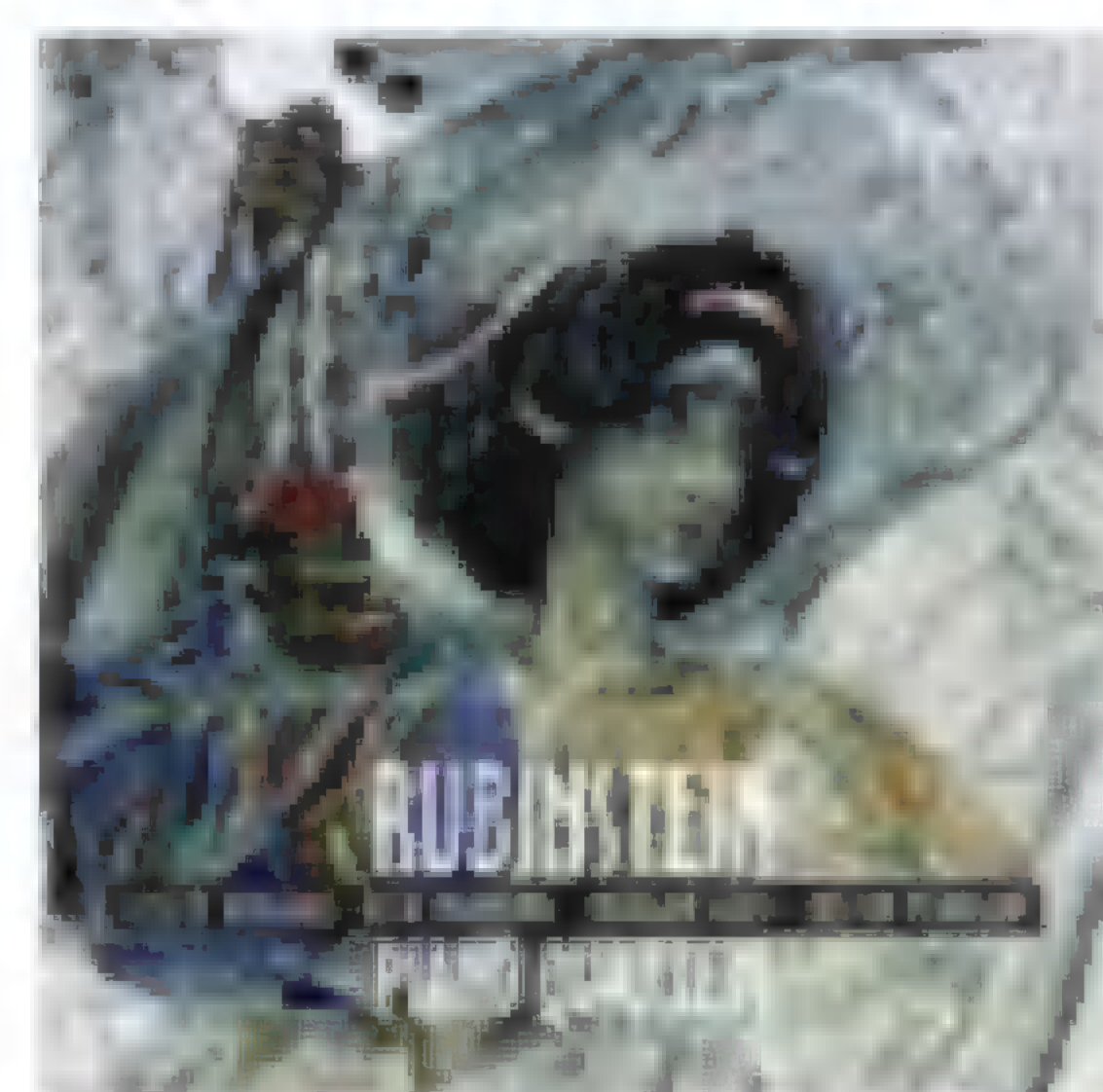
Rubinstein

Piano Quartets – Op 55*bis*; Op 66

Rita Manning *vn* **Morgan Goff** *va*

Justin Pearson *vc* **Leslie Howard** *pf*

Hyperion © CDA68018 (76' • DDD)



Having dealt comprehensively with Liszt (99 CDs for Hyperion), the indefatigable Leslie Howard has been espousing Anton Rubinstein, one of the few pianists whose energy and dash even Liszt admired: he once encouraged a timid

student, 'Play it more like Rubinstein'. Howard has this sense of warmth and energy that characterises Rubinstein even when, as can happen with a composer who wrote so much and so effortlessly, these qualities sometimes overtake actual quality and originality of invention. But though there are passages where this could be said of the F major Quartet, Op 55, Howard brings it all off enthusiastically; and Rubinstein does not disappoint with his melodic gift when it comes to the fruity tune in the Trio of the *Scherzo*. This is, incidentally, the first recording of the string version which Rubinstein made from the original Quintet with wind instruments.

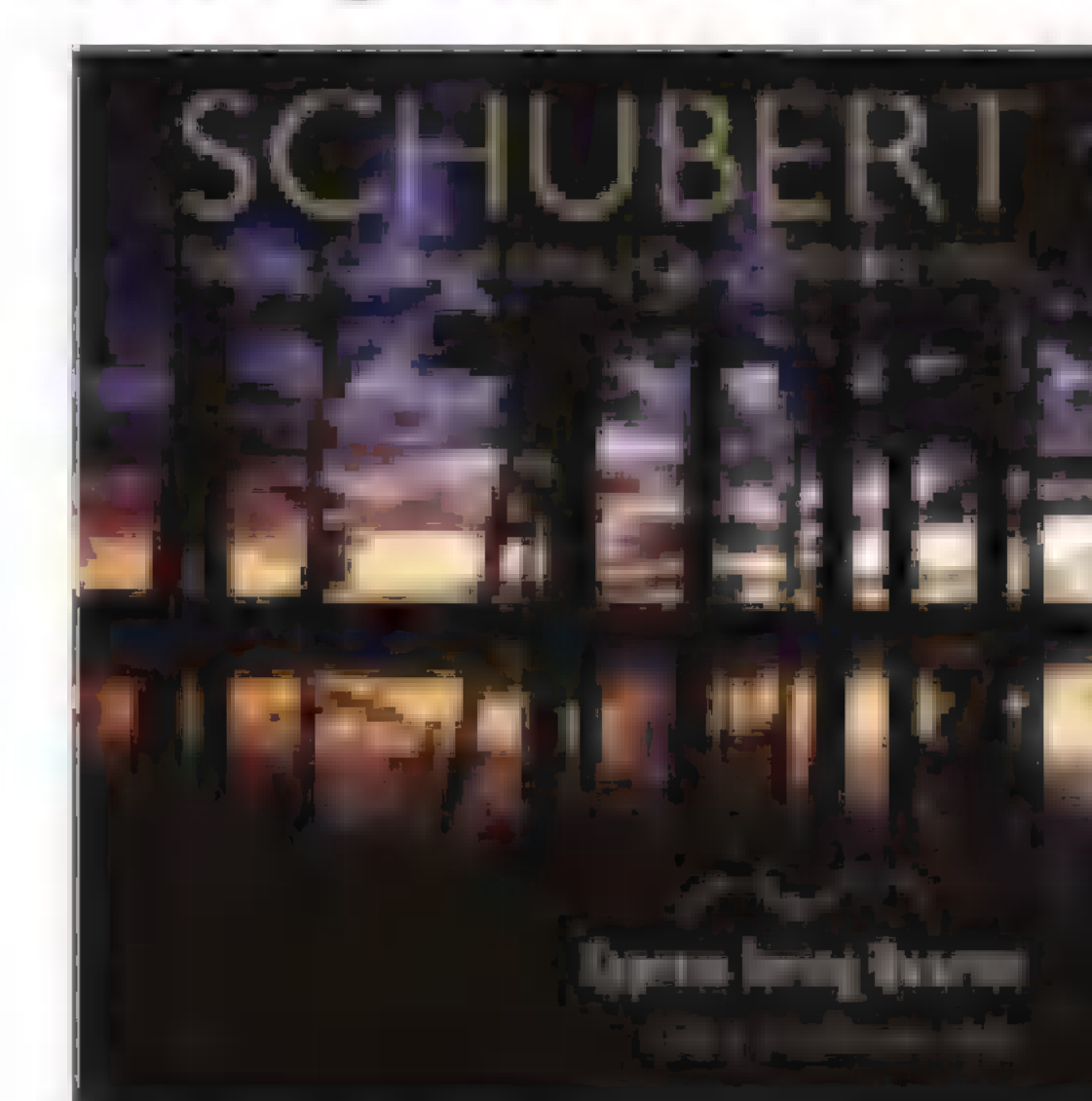
The recording of the later C major Piano Quartet, Op 66, also appears to be the first, – surprisingly, as Rubinstein himself often played it. It is certainly the more accomplished work and contains much of Rubinstein's character – the emotional energy, but also the keyboard virtuosity, the melodic charm, and the capacity for the entertainingly unexpected. Howard, who contributes a helpful booklet essay, understands the music and is excellently supported by the strings in a recording that gives the soloist some precedence but does not obscure the old lion's understanding of string textures. **John Warrack**

Schubert

String Quintet, D956^a. Quartettsatz, D703

Cypress Quartet; ^aGary Hoffman *va*

Avie © AV2307 (63' • DDD)



Myriad moods, immoderate demands and 'unplumbed melancholy underlying

even his brightest and most vivacious moments' (WJ Turner's description of Mozart could apply to Schubert too). The Cypress Quartet capture the sobriety and vivacity of the *Quartettsatz* with a lack of constraint not entirely evident in the Quintet. They discern its overall architecture and show no signs of technical strain; but their interpretative stance veers towards a middle ground, tempo in the first movement rather quick for *Allegro ma non troppo*, emotional temperature low. Contrasts are understated, as they are in the slow movement, laid back in approach and neglecting the importance of infinitesimal shadings of tempo and tone without which monotony sets in.

No group quite captures the mixture of serenity and troubled unrest in this *Adagio* as do The Lindsays and Douglas



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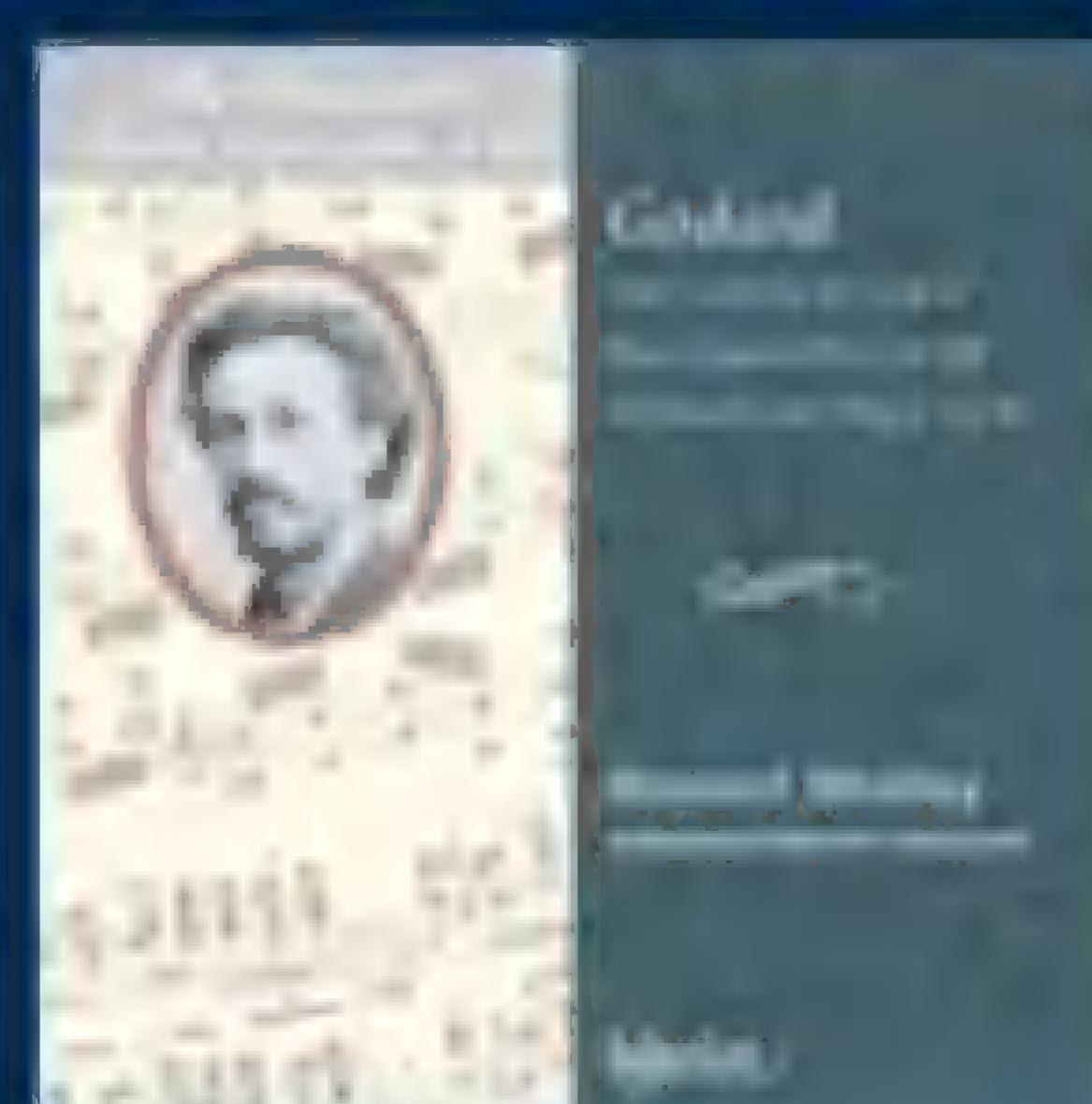
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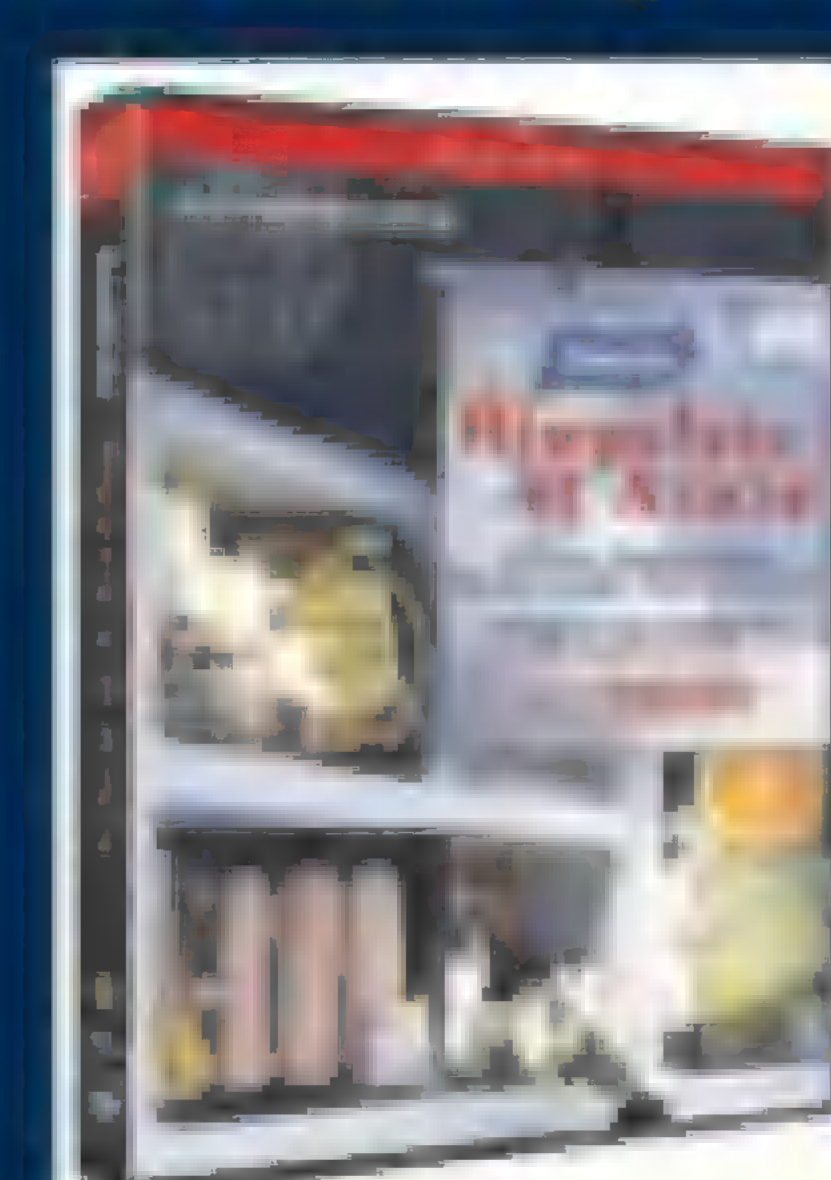
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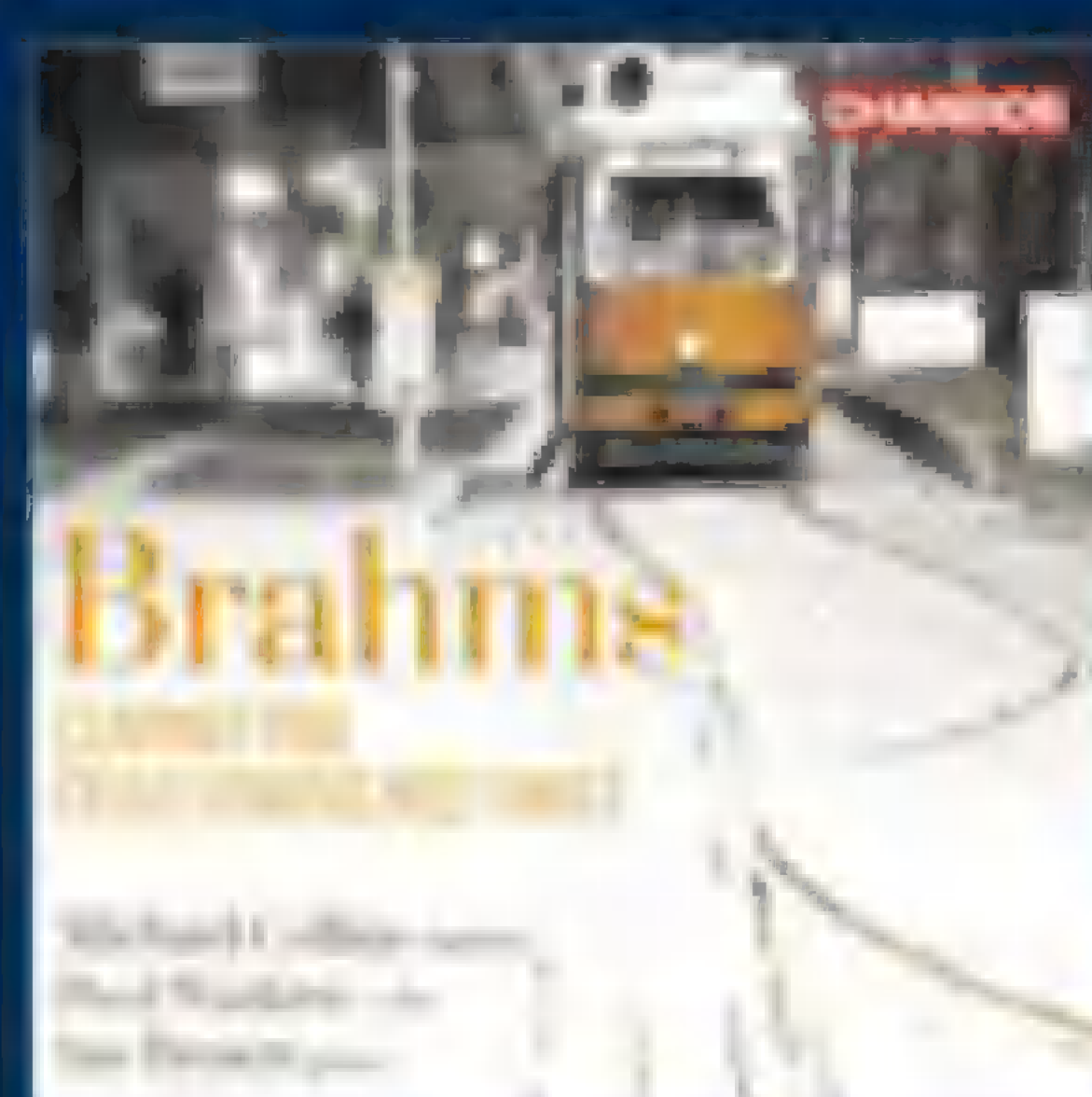
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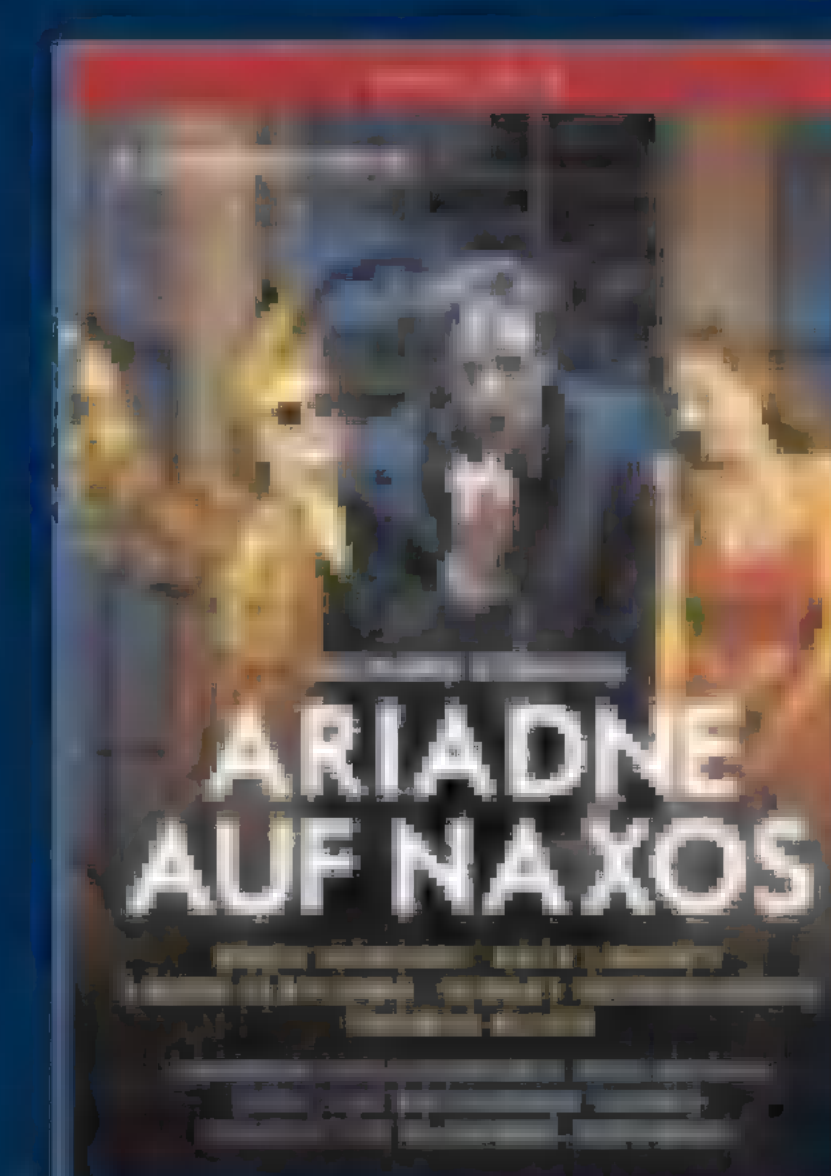
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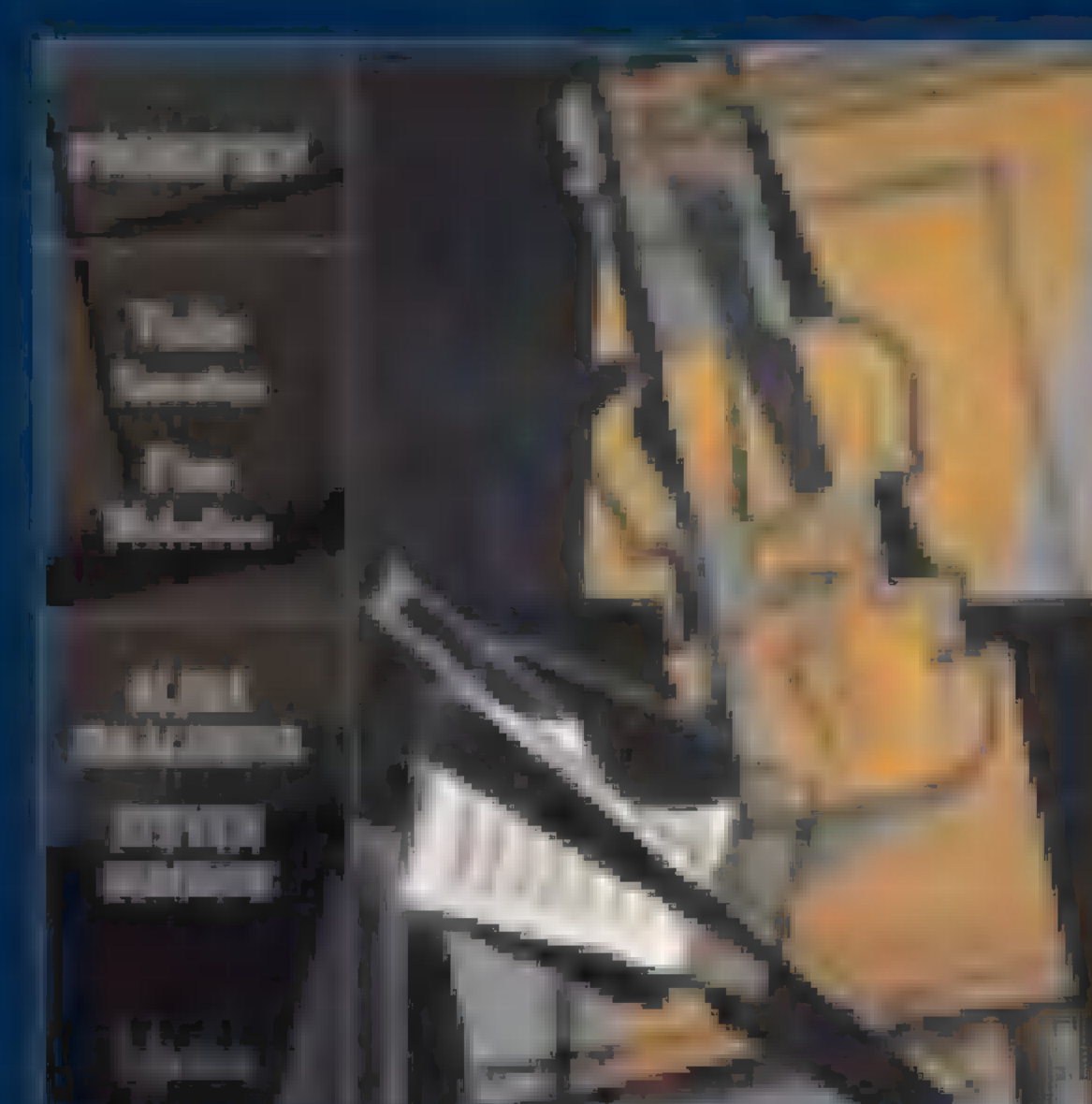
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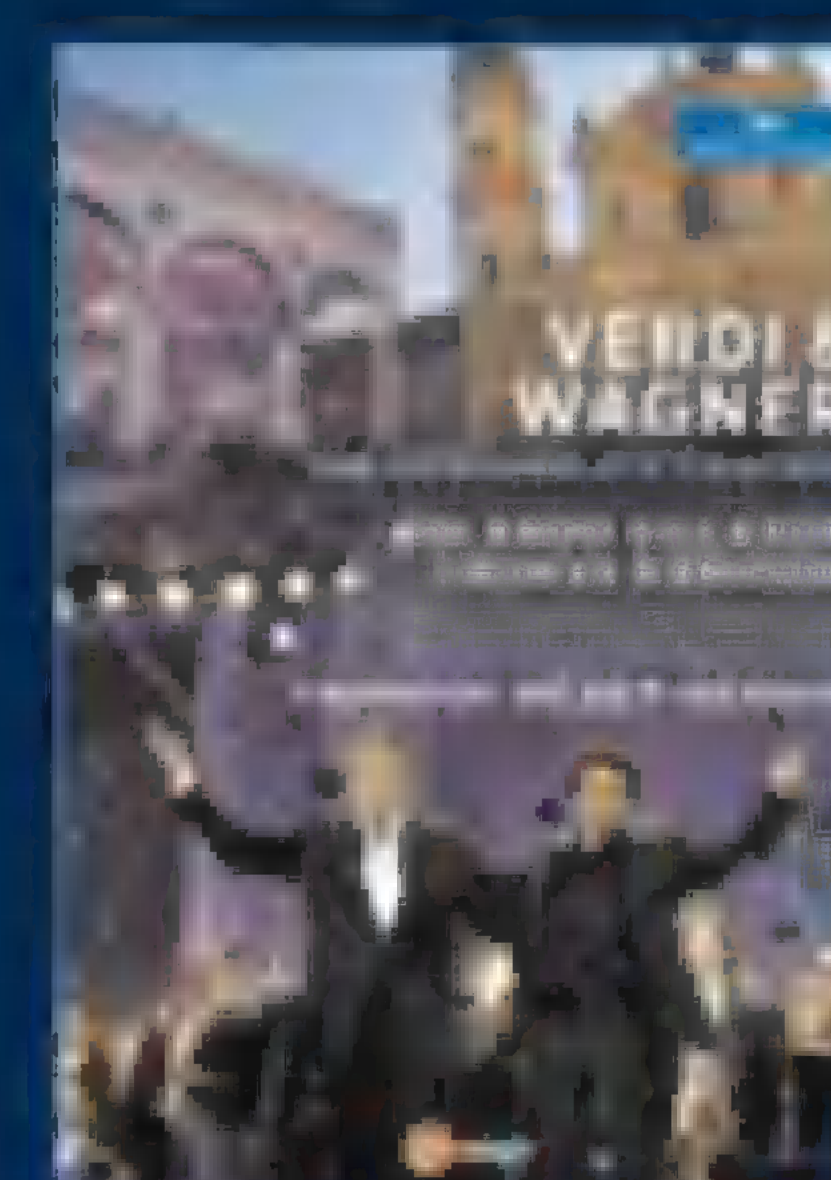
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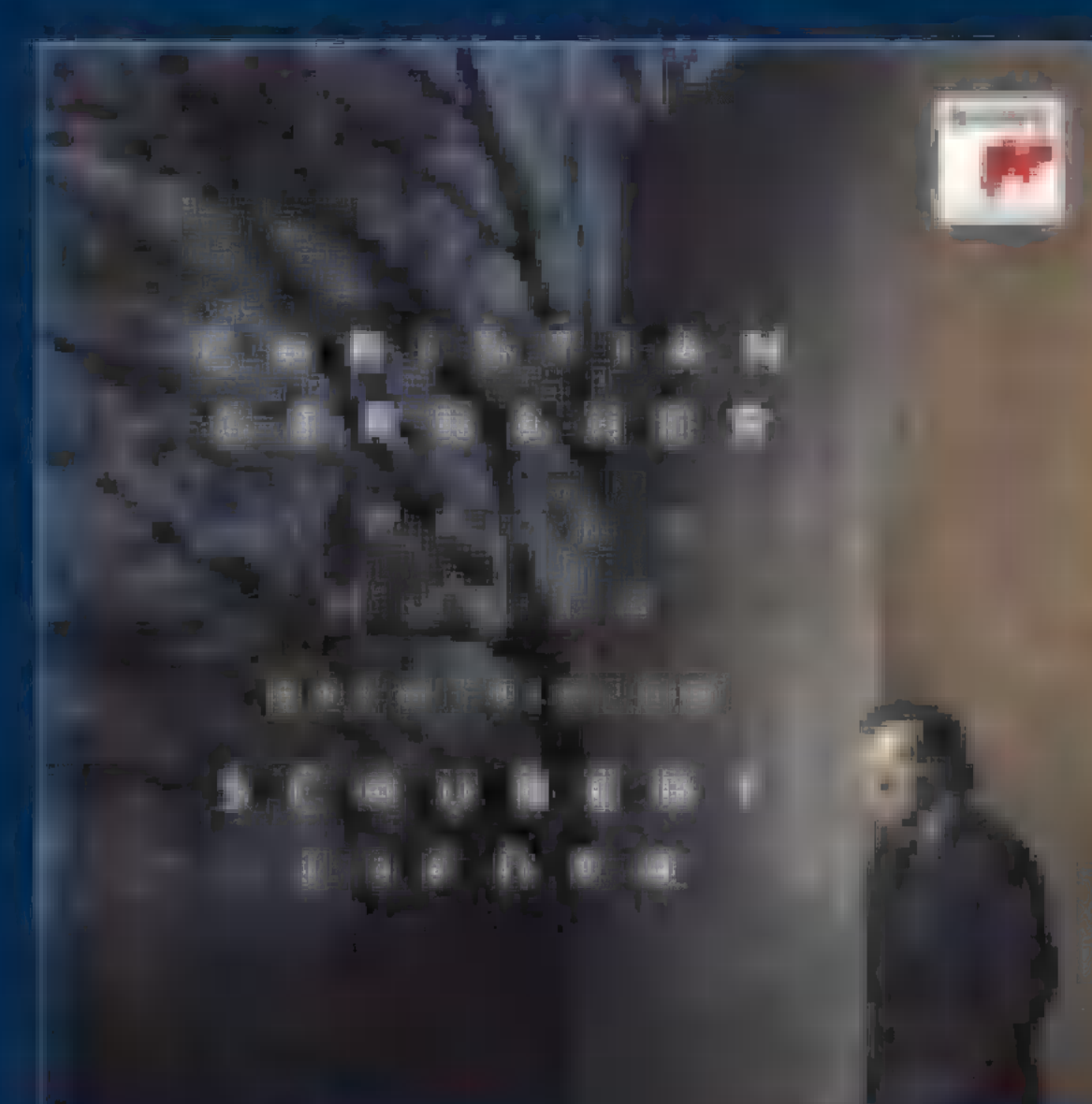
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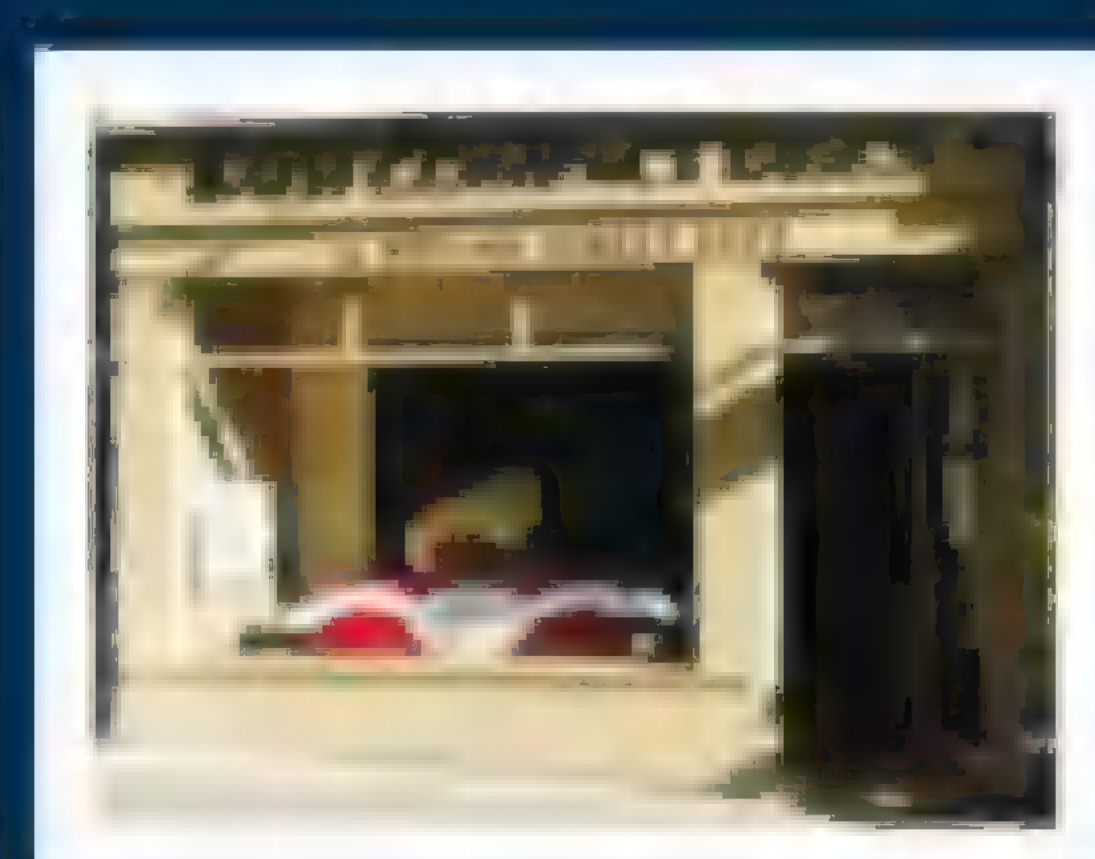
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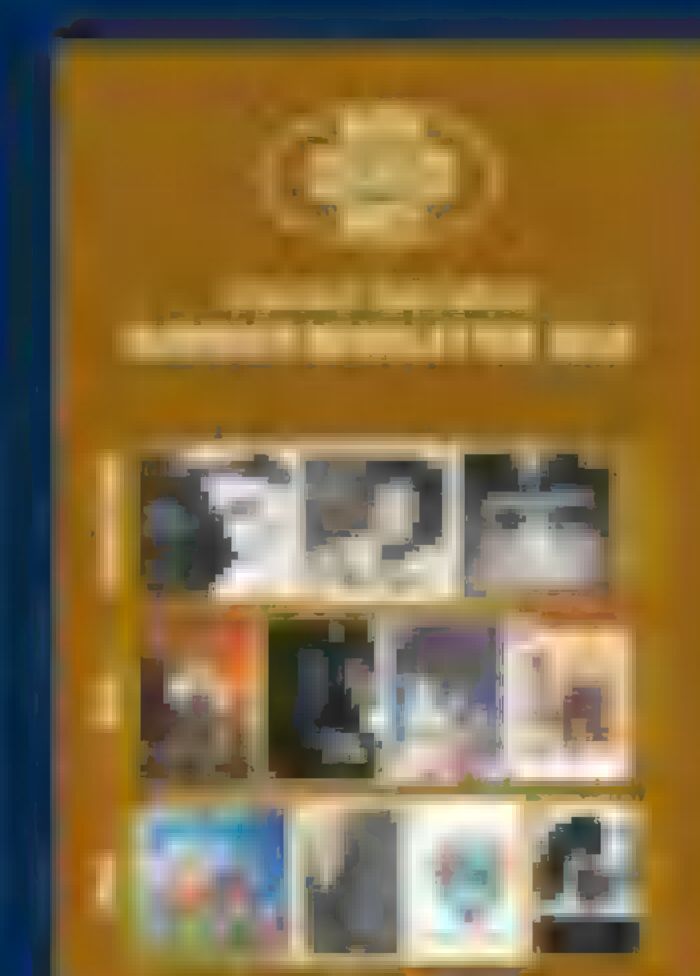
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Cummings, their pace akin to time suspended. Bows seem barely on strings for *pianissimo*, Peter Cropper characterising the first-violin line after the recapitulation as a series of wracking sobs. Running them close are the Belcea Quartet with Valentin Erben; and some of the latest recordings – by the Pavel Haas Quartet/Danjulo Ishizaka and the Quatour Diotima/Anne Gastinel – have their moments too. The Pavel Haas have an exceptional grasp of the outer movements but are a touch casual in the second. Nevertheless, both groups jointly wreck their credibility by abbreviating the Trio. Bars are excised in its second-half repeat and the section before the lead-in to the *Scherzo*. Why? **Nalen Anthoni**

Stg Qnt – selected comparisons:

Lindsay Qt, Cummings (9/85) (ASV)

CDDCA537 or CDDCS243

Belcea Qt, Erben (12/09) (EMI) 967025-2

Pavel Haas Qt, Ishizaka (10/13) (SUPR) SU4110-2

Diotima, Gastinel (2/14) (NAIV) V5331

Quartettsatz – selected comparison:

Jerusalem Qt (7/08) (HARM) HMC90 1990

'1917'

'Works for Violin and Piano'

Debussy Violin Sonata **Elgar** Violin Sonata, Op 82 **Respighi** Violin Sonata **Sibelius** Five Pieces, Op 81

Tamsin Waley-Cohen *vn* **Huw Watkins** *pf*

Signum © SIGCD376 (85' • DDD)



Tamsin Waley-Cohen's love for Debussy's Violin Sonata of 1917 led her

to assemble four works for violin and piano written at that date or near it. The Respighi was an obvious choice; then she discovered that Sibelius had written his Op 81 collection at that time too, while 1917 was the date when Elgar wrote his Sonata, one of his three late chamber works.

The date is not the only quality that the works share: each has an echo of the Spanish. That is true not only of the Debussy. The central movement of the Elgar, with its strange *pizzicato* effects over a slithering melodic line, certainly has something of a Spanish flavour. In the Sibelius pieces it is not only the Aubade that echoes Spanish music, with its spread chords and *pizzicatos*, but the opening Mazurka. The Rondino too, marked *Allegretto grazioso*. The Respighi is mainly distinctive for the elaborate piano-writing, superbly played by Huw Watkins, not least in the tender melancholy of the central slow movement.

Waley-Cohen plays with an obvious love of the music, most sympathetically accompanied by Watkins. Fine sound, with an excellent sense of presence and clean separation. **Edward Greenfield**

'Do Not Go Gentle...'

A Gilbert String Quartet No 3 **J Owen Thomas** Fiori musicali **Parkin** Do Not Go Gentle **Speare** Crowding In **Stoll** String Quartet No 3, 'Fools by Heavenly Compulsion'

Bingham Quartet

Prima Facie © PFCD032 (71' • DDD)



The Bingham Quartet have long included new commissions in concerts and this disc

collates works mainly written either side of the millennium. *Crowding In* (1998) finds Simon Speare drawing inspiration from Balkan folk music across four continuous sections whose fast/slow alternation engenders a palpable sense of tension and release. By contrast, Janet Owen Thomas's *Fiori musicali* (1997) unfolds as six contrasted pieces whose uniform harmonic trajectory suggests a variation process. On a larger scale, David Stoll's Third Quartet (2002) has taken its subtitle from Shakespeare's *King Lear* – the central 'Storm' representing the play's climactic scene in music that is too slow-burning in its cumulative intensity, though the evocations of Cordelia do not lack pathos.

The highlight here is Michael Parkin's *Do Not Go Gentle* (1999), itself a work which has an underlying sense of variation – the initial viola melody being audible in the ensuing build-up to a powerful culmination, after which a long-breathed cello cadenza ushers in an eloquent final section that reinforces the music's 'in memoriam' character. Anthony Gilbert's Third Quartet (1987) provides a scintillating conclusion with its sequence of tropes on Machaut's *Hoquetus David*. Spacious yet detailed sound, informative notes and a valuable reminder of the wealth of string quartet music to emerge from the UK over recent decades – and of the Bingham's role in making it happen.

Richard Whitehouse

'A Thousand Thoughts'

Bey Eviç Taksim Burman Mera Kuchh Saaman **Johnson** Dark was the night, cold was the ground **Karniol** Sim Sholom **Mèkurya** Aha Gédawo **Piazzolla** Five Tango Sensations – Asleep **Riley** Cry of a Lady **Sakhi** Rangin Kaman (exc) **Souleyman** La sidounak sayyada

Traditional An Buachaillín Bán. Danny Boy. Luu Thúy Truong (arr Sinh). The round sun and crescent moon in the sky. Smyrneiko Minore. Tusen Tankar

Kronos Quartet with **Asha Bhosle**, **Don Walser** *voc*

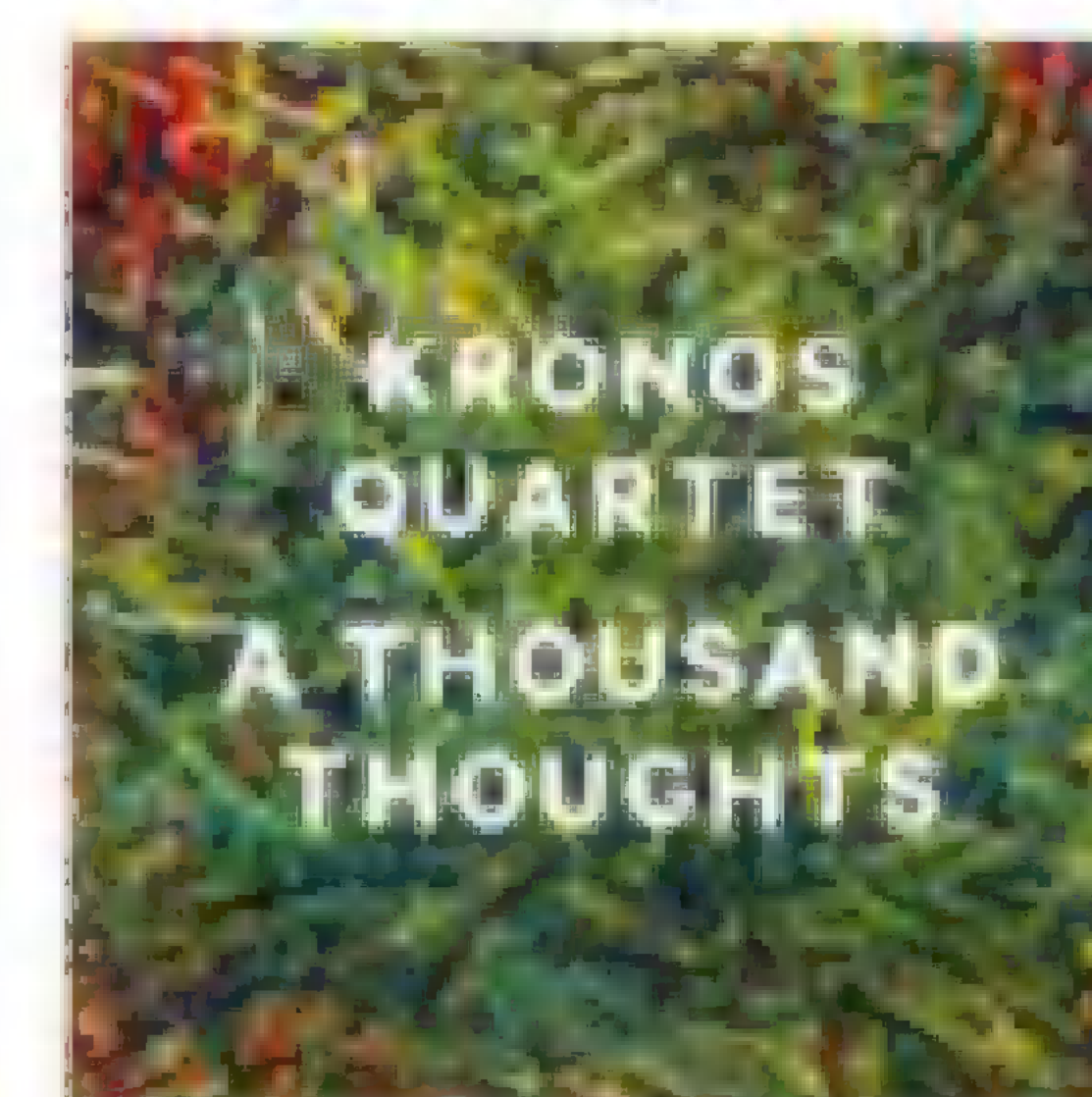
Ástor Piazzolla *bandoneón* **Tony MacMahon** *acco*

Homayn Sakhi *rubab* **Vân-Anh Vanessa Võ** *dàn*

tranh **Wu Man** *pipa/elec sitar* **Zakir Hussain** *tabla*

Le Mystère des Voix Bulgares

Nonesuch © 7559 79557-3 (74' • DDD)



If ever there was a lesson to be learnt from the dangers of musical categorisation

then it surely lies in the example set by the Kronos Quartet. Often recognised as tireless promoters of new music or innovative interpreters of the classical/pop divide, there are far more strings to their collective bows.

This diversity is demonstrated in Kronos's desire to source, arrange and perform music from all over the world. 'A Thousand Thoughts' is a dynamic distillation of their adventures in this area – a journey that can be traced back to collaborations with the Argentine composer Ástor Piazzolla and the American minimalist Terry Riley and Le Mystère des Voix Bulgares in the late 1980s. All are represented on this recording but one of the quartet's most impressive features is the manner in which they have subsequently taken such early explorations down a number of richly rewarding paths.

Almost every corner of the world is explored here, from Ireland to Vietnam via Syria, Ethiopia, Turkey and Afghanistan. And while for some listeners the range of references may be too much, too great, Kronos's interpretative imprimatur provides a real sense of balance and cohesion, from the simple beauty of *Tusen Tankar* (Scandinavia) and *Sim Sholom*, based on the powerful, expressive singing of the early-20th-century Jewish cantor Alter Yechiel Karniol, to the exuberant comic drama of Chinese puppeteer music or gentle Bollywood pop.

And on the memorable final track, one is reminded in American Country singer Don Walser's gut-wrenching performance of the well-known 'Danny Boy' of Charles Ives's anecdote about old John, the local stonemason, whose off-key bellowing prompted the composer to remark: 'Look into his face and hear the music of the ages.' The music of the ages is very fittingly represented throughout 'A Thousand Thoughts'. **Pwyll ap Siôn**

Pierre Monteux

Nalen Anthoni profiles the French-born American conductor who at the age of 86 secured a principal-conductorship and worked successfully right up until his death

Boggle your mind. An 86-year old stipulates a 25-year contract with a 25-year option. And he gets it. The London Symphony Orchestra is honoured to appoint Pierre Monteux as its principal conductor, on his own terms. This was 1961, climaxing a gestation begun in 1957 when he made the first of 37 recordings with the orchestra, of excerpts from Tchaikovsky's *The Sleeping Beauty*. Two years earlier, recriminations and resignations had resulted in a new band on a new threshold. Who better than an old-world maestro to launch them into greatness?

Old-world indeed. Brahms and Saint-Saëns had been active during his lifetime, Enescu was a contemporary, and Monteux's ideal conductor was Arthur Nikisch; Berlioz had been dead just six years before Monteux was born (April 4, 1875). Monteux had presided over some impressive premieres, too: Antheil's Symphony No 6, Bliss's *Hymn to Apollo*, Bloch's *Evocations*, Debussy's *Jeux*, Milhaud's Viola Concerto, Poulenc's *Concert champêtre* and Prokofiev's Symphony No 3, plus two works by Ravel (*Daphnis et Chloé* and *Tzigane*) and three by Stravinsky (*Petrushka*, *Le rossignol* and *Le sacre du printemps*). It's a catholic collection, reflected in a catholic discography that began with *Le sacre du printemps* in 1929, recorded with a French orchestra – as it was, too, in 1956 for his fourth and only stereo recording of the work.

Rumours that Monteux hated Gallic bands are largely confirmed in his recorded output. Glimpses of pre-eminence intersperse with flagging inspiration – take the suite *L'oiseau de feu*, for example; though *Petrushka* fares better. Yet of real appeal is the timbre of the wind instruments, the sort that Stravinsky probably had in mind, offering a sound picture unlikely today – nasal bassoons, for example, long since superseded by fruity-toned German models.

Not masked (though not consistent) is Monteux's sense of rhythm, that ineffable feel for flow, fully evident in a dignified Bach Orchestral Suite No 2. There are no period practices on display; LSO strings at full strength may take acclimatising to. But could any listener be

immune to the charms of a light, sprightly dancing Badinerie, with Monteux's son Claude as soloist? Monteux was certainly historically uninformed, but he was very informed in the art of conducting. Follow through to Mozart's Flute Concerto, K314, also with the LSO; and Haydn's *Clock* Symphony with the Vienna Philharmonic – an outdated text in which Monteux commands attention through a saturnine D minor introduction, a fierce G minor middle in the *Andante* and a zippy finale, the tempo reminiscent of what's heard today. Dissimilarity probably lies in a style of yore – mellower string attack, slower rise and decay times of notes.

'His preparation "synthesised an intense concentration that consumed all superficial nonsense"' – Neville Marriner

'Know your score perfectly' was a precept to his pupils. Monteux's understanding of foundation, structure and proportion was always unfailingly sure. Brahms's Second Symphony (also with

the VPO) exemplifies songful freedom within a steely carapace, the first movement exposition repeated probably for the first time on disc, with impeccable balance between orchestral voices, as well as a clarity of line and ever-present translucent string textures. These qualities are finessed to their subtlest levels in music by the quite different personalities of Debussy (*Nuages*, *Fêtes*, *Le martyre de Saint Sébastien* fragments) and Ravel (*La valse* and the complete *Ma mère l'oye*). Monteux, principal viola of the Concerts Colonne at 18, had played in *La mer* conducted by the composer and learnt his craft from the ground up.

So wide was Monteux's repertoire that he resented being typecast as a French conductor, retorting: 'I'm just a conductor.' He claimed that Brahms's music was closer

to him than possibly that of any other composer, and that nearness is passionately felt in the *Academic Festival Overture* and the *Tragic Overture*. But as a conductor whose preparation 'synthesised an intense concentration that consumed all superficial nonsense' (according to Sir Neville Marriner, whom Monteux both conducted and mentored), Monteux offered special treats of musical discernment spanning Finland and England, too. Thus does he defy leading Sibelius authority Robert

DEFINING MOMENTS

•1884-96 – *Serious music studies*

Enrols at the Paris Conservatoire for 12 years, the last three 'in arduous study of counterpoint and fugue'. Wins violin first prize, switches to viola professionally.

•1911 – *Invitation to conduct Ballets Russes*

Diaghilev invites him to conduct the Ballet Russes. The next year he premieres *Daphnis et Chloé*, of which he makes a studio recording in 1959 with the LSO (Praga Digitals PRD/DSD 350 073; Decca 475 7525).

•1924 – *Netherlands association*

Begins a 10-year association with the Amsterdam Concertgebouw as co-conductor with Willem Mengelberg.

•1963 – *Associations with The Rite continue*

Conducts the 'children' from memory at London's Royal Albert Hall for the 50th anniversary of *Le sacre*. Stravinsky arrives late.

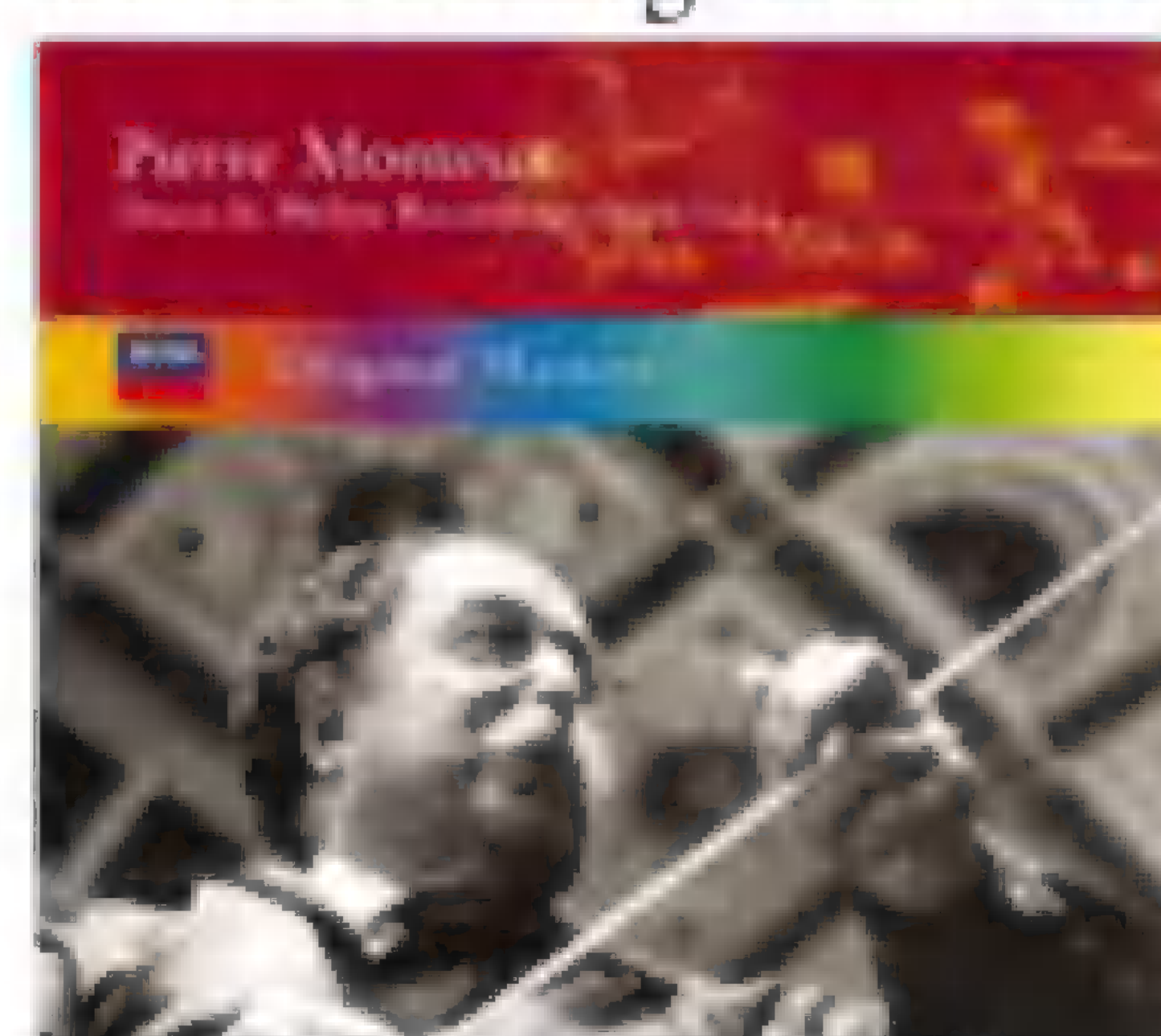


Pierre Monteux rehearsing at the Royal Festival Hall in 1961

Layton, for whom the second movement of Symphony No 2 is 'loose-limbed and rhapsodic in feeling', the finale 'the weakest single movement in all his symphonies'. Analysis of every attribute meld into an interpretation that carries all before it in a single sweep. Monteux senses the big picture – just as he does in the *Enigma* Variations (which he first conducted in 1944), its own attributes honed to a cutting-edge of elevated understanding. Rewardingly, the critical barb – 'Elgar with a foreign accent' – hurled at Toscanini in 1930 wasn't repeated. Raptures reigned instead.

At Monteux's last rehearsal with the LSO (he called the players his 'children'), he righted many errors in the parts for Dvořák's *New World* Symphony. The awed musicians could only say, 'What do you think of him, Madame, correcting those

mistakes? Isn't that something?' The 'Madame' in question was Doris, the lady at Monteux's side, who was protective to the end (which finally came in the early hours of July 1, 1964). Yet she was fiery too, once storming into a conducting class and dramatically declaiming, 'Pierre, I'm leaving you and never coming back!' His reply: 'Leave the cheque book.' **G**



THE ESSENTIAL RECORDING

Pierre Monteux Decca & Philips
Recordings 1956-1964

Decca 475 7798

Instrumental



Harriet Smith on the latest disc in Paul Lewis's Schubert series:

'A mixed affair but the new recordings reaffirm that Lewis is one of the great Schubertians of our time' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 66**



Marc Rochester listens to the first recording of Merton's new organ:

'This is a wonderful instrument, and it is the undoubted star of this lovely new recording' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 69**

JS Bach

Solo Cello Suites (arr for viola) –

No 2, BWV1008; No 3, BWV1009; No 6, BWV1012

Maxim Rysanov *va*

BIS Ⓢ BIS2033 (65' • DDD/DSD)



Finally, the Ukrainian viola player Maxim Rysanov has completed his

collection of JS Bach's Cello Suites transcribed for viola after the 2010 release of the monumental first volume (A/10). And as with the first, although it may be that that rise in tessitura suffocates some of the calm out of certain movements, this second volume displays the sort of exhilarating and challenging perspective that deserves to make it endure as one of these masterworks' great interpretations.

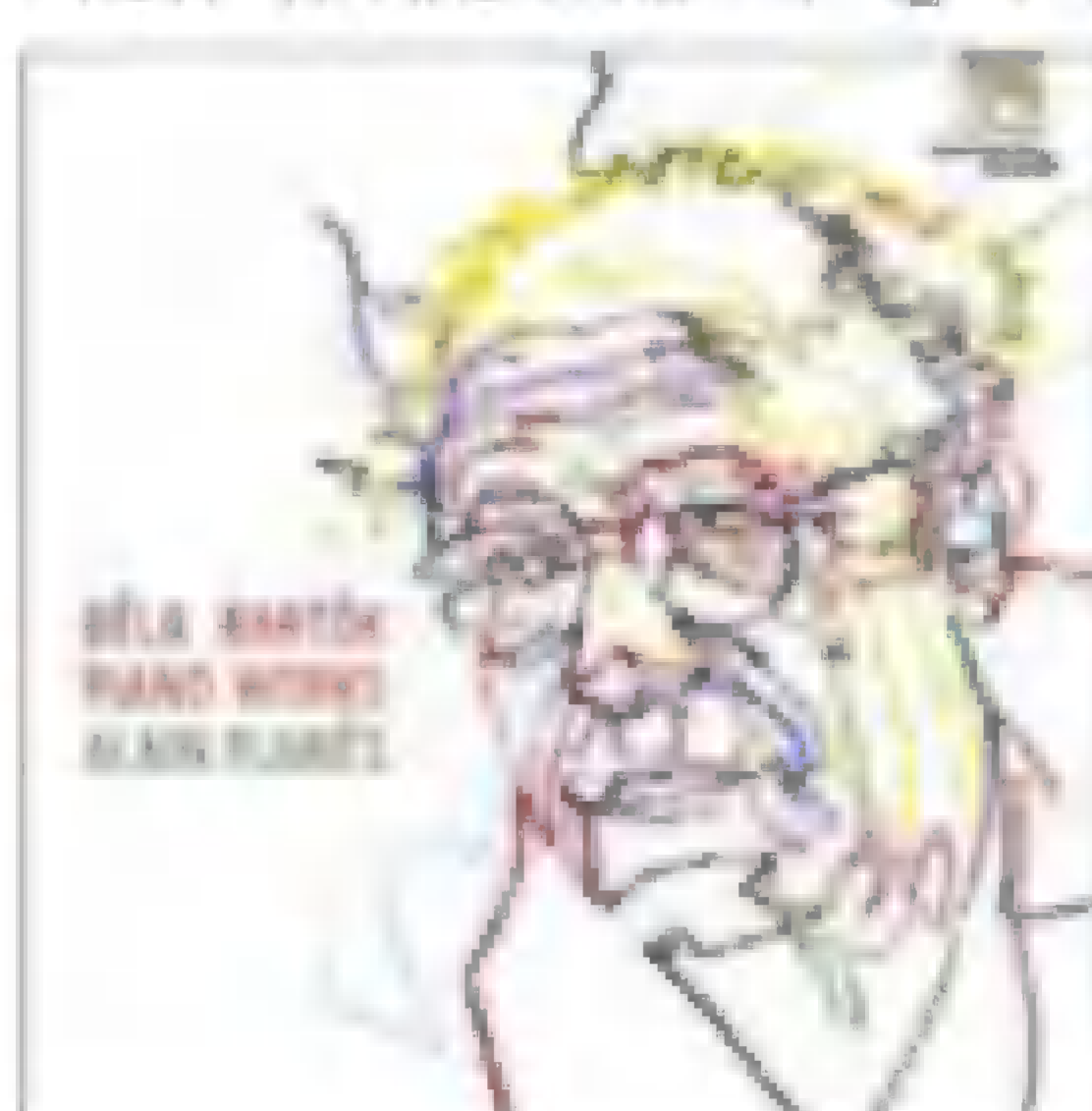
What may be lost in depth of pitch is certainly not lost in depth of tone, and Rysanov finds a refined way through his performance that is not evangelically authentic and yet – with its subtle phrasing and elegantly sparse embellishment – stops far short of the traditionally Romantic Russian school of Bach-playing. It is in the Second Suite, though, where he uses a different, lighter bow and keeps the music at pitch an octave up (rather than playing it up only a fifth, as most viola players do), where he moves the music from a direct transcription of cello music into the world of the viola da gamba. It is here that the music takes on an entirely different character and brings out the dance element it is always very difficult to hear on the cello (in particular in the Gigue, here and in the other two suites, Rysanov brings out music that is about as ugly and aggressive as Bach gets, which is enormously exciting). This, of all the suites, is surprisingly easy to acclimatise the ear to: no, it's not like listening to the Cello Suites on a viola but, as Rysanov plays it, it's like listening to and falling in love with the piece for the first time. And that should be taken as the rare and beautiful opportunity it is. **Caroline Gill**

Bartók

Dance Suite, Sz77. Fifteen Hungarian Peasant Songs, Sz71. Four Old Songs. Piano Sonata, Sz80. Six Romanian Folk Dances, Sz56. Fourteen Bagatelles, Op 6 Sz38

Alain Planès *pf*

Harmonia Mundi Ⓢ HMC90 2163 (79' • DDD)



Normally one concludes a review with comments about sound quality, but in

this case the engineering's full-bodied piano sonority and palpable concert-hall ambience present a more colourful and three-dimensional side to Alain Planès's artistry than in many of his previous Harmonia Mundi releases. This proves crucial in Bartók, whose jagged rhythms and asymmetrical accents Planès consistently shapes with a wonderful variety of nuances and voicings. Take the *Dance Suite's* *Allegro molto*, where the often muddy low-register chords and passagework emerge with greater transparency than usual, while the pianist's subtle pedalling in the lyrical rising scales near the end allow a tangy hint of dissonance to peep through. Similarly, Planès plays down the *Allegro* finale's biting propulsion in order to illuminate the harmonic complexity in the climactic polytextural writing.

The Sonata stands out for its long-lined breadth, in contrast to Zoltán Kocsis's slightly drier and more acerbic reading (Hungaroton). The second selection in a group from the *Hungarian Peasant Songs* features pinpointed rolled chords and an ending whose tricky melodic ornaments are timed and articulated to magical perfection. However, Kocsis's rhythmic liberties in works based on folksongs and traditional dances convey more idiomatic flair. In the *Romanian Folk Dances*, sample Planès's earnest phrasing of the 'Stick Dance' alongside Kocsis's tiny yet spine-tingling accelerations, or Planès's even-handed way with the concluding 'Fast Dance' next to Kocsis's whirling right-hand lines and

jabbing left-hand accents. And so it goes with the Fourteen Bagatelles. One can say that Planès has served Bartók well, while Kocsis remains Bartók's master.

Jed Distler

Beethoven • Chopin

'Passion and Fantasy'

Beethoven Piano Sonata No 23, 'Appassionata', Op 57 Chopin Fantaisie, Op 49. Piano Sonata No 3, Op 49

Sophia Agranovich *pf*

Roméo Ⓢ 7303 (73' • DDD)



'Passion and Fantasy' is the eye-catching title for Sophia Agranovich's recital

of Beethoven's *Appassionata* Sonata and Chopin's *Fantaisie* and B minor Sonata. The accompanying blurb describes her as 'a singular artist who should be admired for that quality alone' but enthusiasm becomes qualified when you consider the nature of her singularity. The Chopin *Fantaisie's* opening is sensitively inflected and the ensuing drama and turbulence are caught in a refreshingly personal way. But if her warmth and affection for Chopin are hardly in doubt, her *rubato* is of the stop/go variety (that predictable linger on the first beat of the bar before a nervous acceleration into the phrase; a nagging at the music's natural line and impetus). Her unsteady pulse at the opening of the Third Sonata is hardly *maestoso* and in the return of the *Largo's* principal theme she is simply trying too hard for an ultimate expression.

Agranovich's Beethoven lacks breadth and eloquence, and if her highly strung temperament is suited to the finale's urgency and propulsion, this is hardly a competitive performance. All these much-recorded works exist in many outstanding recordings, making this hard to recommend. By the highest standards, Roméo Records' sound is muffled and constricted.

Bryce Morrison

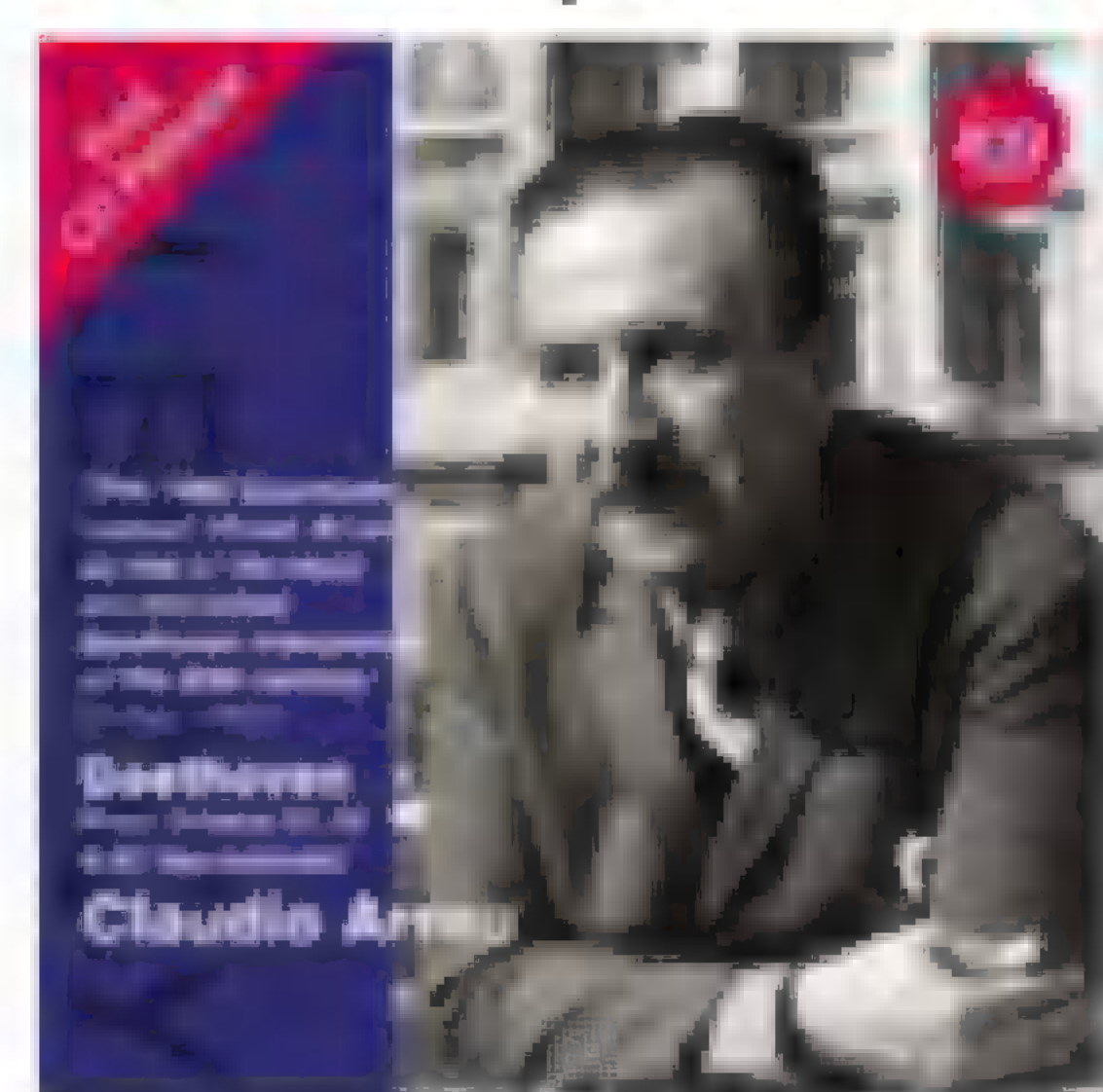
Beethoven

Piano Sonatas – No 23, 'Appassionata', Op 57; No 31, Op 110; No 32, Op 111

Claudio Arrau *pf*

ICA Classics mono (M) ICAC5122 (75' • ADD)

Broadcast performances, April 5, 1960



Although Claudio Arrau's Beethoven hardly lacks catalogue representation, this

first release of live Swedish Radio performances from April 5, 1960, is revealing in several respects. For one, the slightly distant microphone placement conveys much of the colour, depth and dynamic proportions of Arrau's full-bodied sonority as one experienced it in a concert hall. What's more, Arrau often lived more dangerously in front of an audience.

By 1960 Arrau had consolidated the broad, massive, rhetorical Beethoven style familiar from his later recordings, yet the 57-year-old pianist could still unleash firebrand virtuosity at full capacity. In Op 110's first movement, Arrau's uncommonly distinct articulation of the left-hand passagework is more shapely and nuanced compared alongside the studio versions, while the Fugue's increasingly elaborate fingerwork takes on greater animation and urgency with little aid from the pedal. Op 111 emerges as a large-scale epic packed with dramatic tension and sustaining power. The hall ambience creates a three-dimensional hue around Arrau's disembodied chains of trills and the Arietta's bounding dotted rhythms press ahead without losing the slightest definition. Firmness and flexibility triumphantly merge as Arrau builds the *Appassionata*'s first movement's sweeping textures from the bottom up, mixing and matching timbres in accordance with the music's harmonic trajectory. In the *Andante con moto*'s first variation, Arrau illuminates the aching dissonance by laying into the off-beat bass notes, and he allows the finale's hidden melodies and motifs within the busy passagework their full due. Only the *Presto* coda betrays the tiniest hint of fatigue.

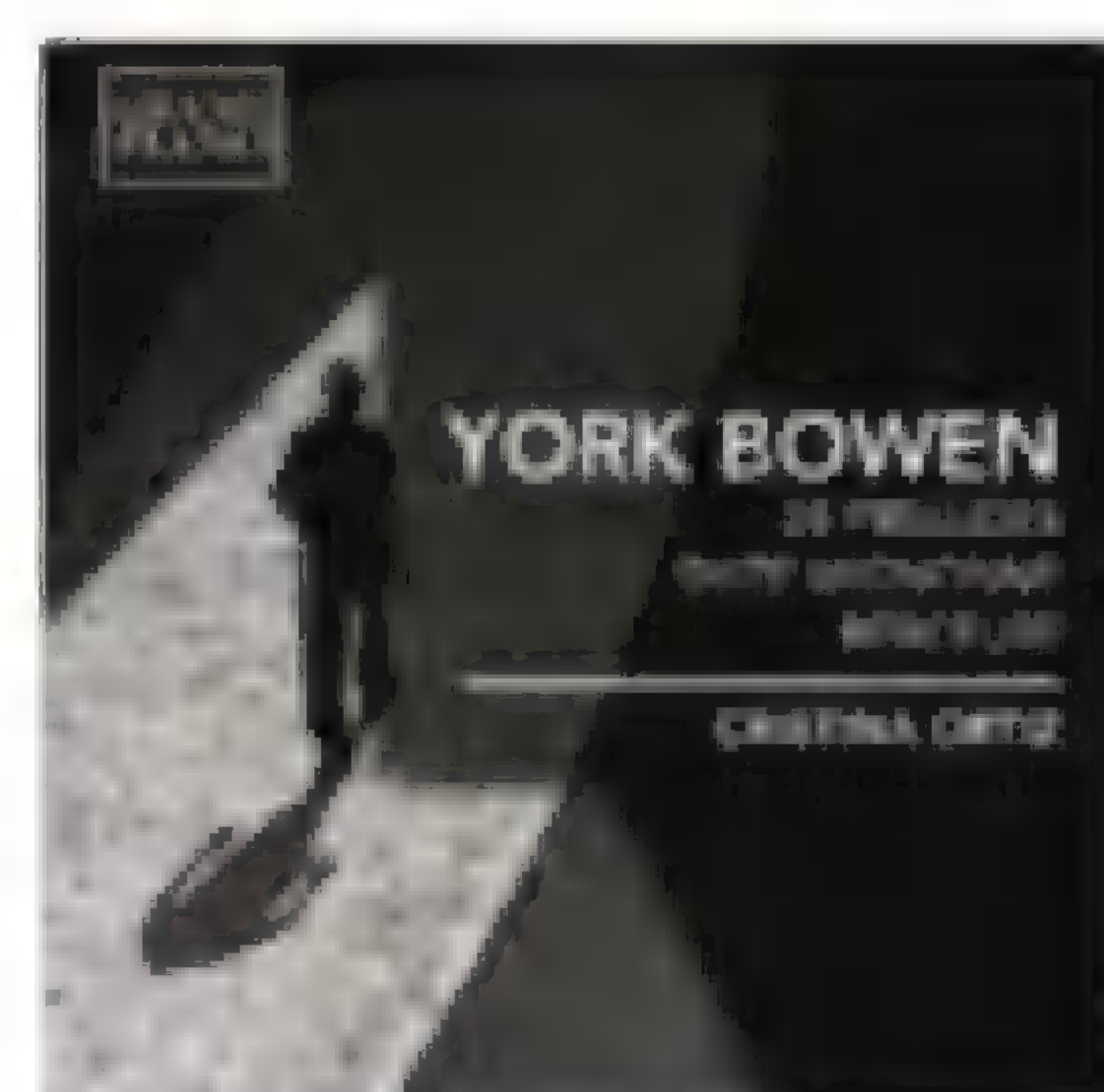
Jonathan Summers's perceptive annotations add further value to a release that enhances if not necessarily adds to Arrau's extensive legacy. **Jed Distler**

Bowen

Berceuse, Op 83. Twenty-Four Preludes, Op 102. Suite mignonne, Op 39. Suite, Op 30 – No 3, Barcarolle

Cristina Ortiz *pf*

Grand Piano (F) GP637 (69' • DDD)



York Bowen (1884–1961) became the cruel victim of passing and dismissive fashion, his lovingly crafted, lyrically haunting ideas swept aside. Yet only a puritan could resist his magical daydreams, with their glowing and personal remembrance of past ages (notably of Chopin and Rachmaninov). Busoni's description of Liszt's 'La ricordanza' étude as being 'like a packet of yellowed love letters' could equally apply to much of Bowen's piano-writing.

On record, Stephen Hough's dazzling *réclame* (Hyperion, 6/96) was followed by Joop Celis's complete cycle (Chandos) and Danny Driver's set of the six piano sonatas (Hyperion, 12/09), and now comes a deeply affectionate tribute from Cristina Ortiz. Her performance of the 24 Preludes has all the love and freshness of a recent discovery. And, whether in her supple grace and fluency in the gorgeous seventh Prelude or in the sombre magnificence of No 24, you will hear playing quite without the hard edge of the over-seasoned virtuoso but a charm and fluency that create their own moving, poetic ambience. The exquisite Berceuse and the Barcarolle from the Op 30 Suite could hardly be given more insinuatingly, and when you hear Ortiz in the 'Moto perpetuo' from the *Suite mignonne* you will marvel at such musical empathy, backed by an immaculate dexterity. A more endearing case for Bowen would be hard to imagine. **Bryce Morrison**

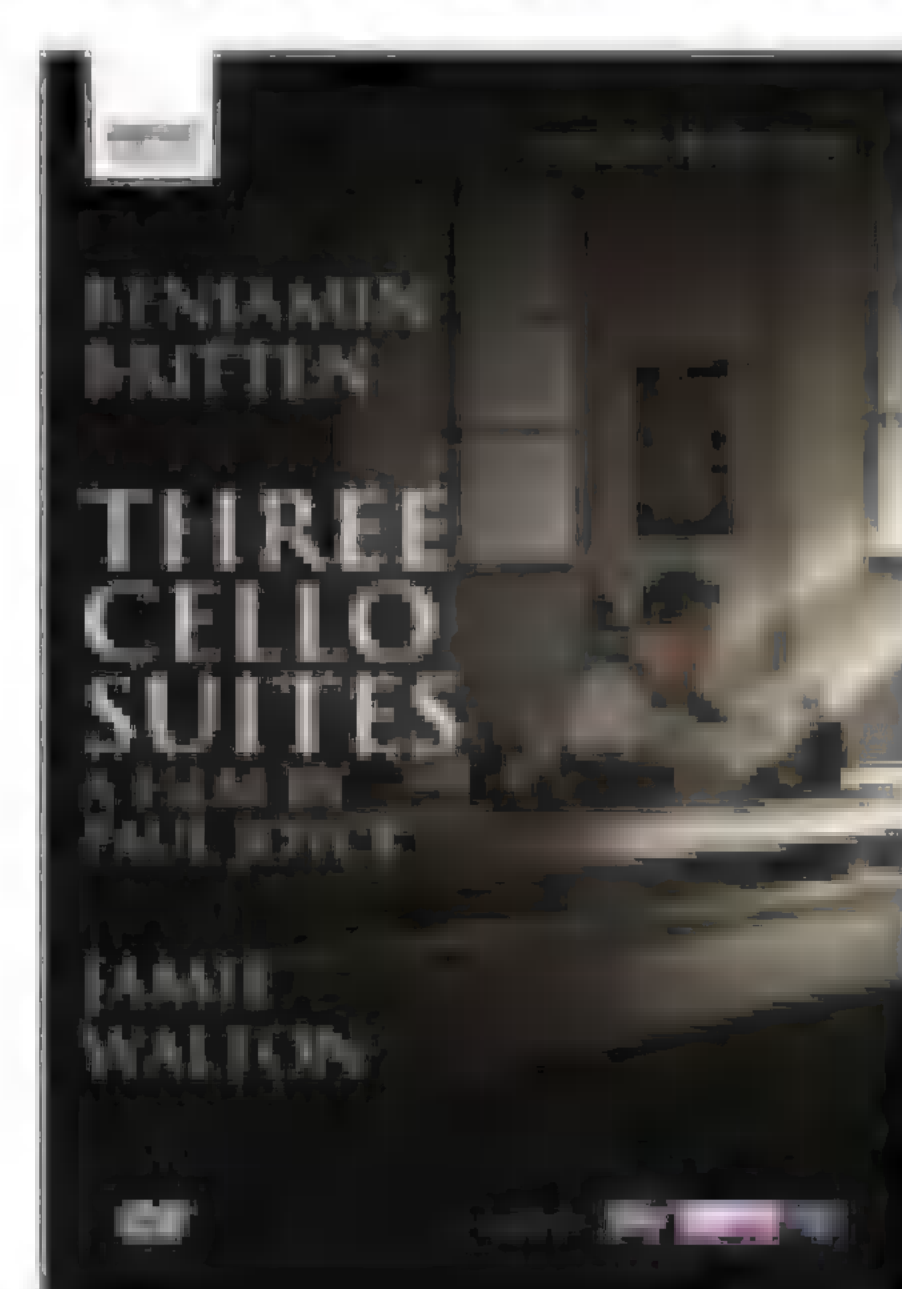
Britten

'Three Suites for Cello'

A film by Paul Joyce

Jamie Walton *vc*

Signum (F) (M) SIGDVD011



Stereo • (O)

The most striking thing about Jamie Walton in the interview that opens Paul Joyce's film of Benjamin Britten's three Cello Suites is his lack of egocentricity. Self-effacing and not in the least pretentious, he talks with great sensitivity about the significance of these works – both to him and as works open to appraisal and criticism. It is difficult to suggest that hearing and watching a musician speak about a work immediately (or not) before a performance will not in any way inform how the listener receives it. At worst it can cheapen and de-intensify it;

at best it can add a further dimension to music with which one already has an abiding relationship.

So it is surprisingly mesmerising watching a player such as Walton, whose musical insight allows him to honour the volatility that runs between the Suites (and often between their movements, and even bars), play with the sense of calm and concentration that he does. This is particularly striking in the First Suite, where the technical demands are such that to meet the challenge of staying as still and tranquil as he does gives the music itself far more power. Walton has always been able to see the bigger picture, never giving the impression that he believes in chasing technical perfection at the cost of the musical momentum of a piece, but here it is compelling to see how no compromise has to be made anywhere.

This is even true of the Chaconne of the Second Suite, which often has a tendency in performance – much like Bach's – to goad players into trying to control it, to the detriment either of the tuning or the varied musical narrative, or both. This is combined with simple videography that accompanies the progression of the works from bright morning sunlight through afternoon and creeping dusk to arrive at full night for the introverted, death-concerned Third. It is enormously atmospheric and, as with Walton's playing, takes the viewer through a profoundly moving artistic process with minimum fuss, and maximum effect. **Caroline Gill**

Dowland

'My Favourite Dowland'

My Lady Hunnsdon's Puffe, P54. The Shoemaker's Wife: A Toy, P58. La mia Barbara, P95. Sir John Smith, his Almain, P47. A Fancy, P6. Sir John Langton, his Pavin, P14. The King of Denmark, his Galliard, P40. The Frog Galliard, P23a. Lachrimae, P15. Galliard to Lachrimae, P46. Fantasie, P1a. Farewell, P3. Forlorn Hope Fancie, P2. The Right Honourable Robert, Earl of Essex, his Galliard, P42a. A Coye Joye, P80. Mrs Vaux's Gigge, P57. Mrs Winter's Jump, P55. The Right Honourable the Lady Cliftons Spirit, P45. Walsingham, P67. A Fancy, P5. A Pavin, P18. The most sacred Queene Elizabeth, her Galliard, P41. Semper Dowland semper dolens, P9

Paul O'Dette *lute*

Harmonia Mundi (F) HMU90 7515 (75' • DDD)



After penning *Farewell*, which Paul O'Dette describes as Dowland's greatest solo lute work, the composer was to live for

30 more years. Let's hope O'Dette, who, at 60, marks 20 years since recording Dowland's complete lute works with this recording, likewise continues to delight us for some time. 'My Favourite Dowland' is just that: not a best-of but a collection of Dowland pieces the lutenist, who started life as a rock guitarist, has most enjoyed playing in concert over the last four decades.

So here is O'Dette, the master of the most intimate thoughts of composers from Bach and Bacheler to Milano and Molinaro, playing almost for himself, with us as eavesdroppers. Using a larger instrument than he would normally employ for Dowland, O'Dette, Montaigne-like, resists sententiousness in favour of unguarded reflection. This serves him equally well in the more emotionally and musically complex works such as the chromatic *Farewell* and *Forlorn Hope Fancy* – which together form the dark centre of this recital – and the brooding *Semper Dowland semper dolens* as it does in miniatures such as *Mrs Winter's Jump* and *A Coye Joye*. And if, as in the famous *Lachrimae*, O'Dette allows considerable breathing space between paragraphs, phrases and even individual tones, the following *Galliard to Lachrimae* shows he's lost none of his youthful intensity. A fitting tribute to both composer and interpreter.

William Yeoman

Mozart

Piano Sonatas – No 6, K284; No 15, K533/494.
Fantasy, K397. Rondos – K485; K511

Francesco Piemontesi *pf*

Naïve © V5367 (68' • DDD)



Aside from the clear yet somewhat bright engineering, the first thing an astute listener

will notice about this Mozart recital is that the selections are thoughtfully varied and sequenced. The slowly unfolding D minor Fantasy suggests a raising curtain, an introductory narration in Francesco Piemontesi's poised reading, while its surprise brisk major-key ending provides the perfect bridge into the upbeat pomp of the early D major Sonata, K284. Try playing the finale's theme and then intercutting the subsequent D major Rondo, K485, in place of that movement's variations, and you wouldn't find anything amiss; thankfully Piemontesi plays this movement as written (only 'A'-section repeats, though), and with discreet, witty left-hand accents to spice things up.

His phrasing in the A minor Rondo, K511, helps underline the impact of Mozart's increasing elaboration of the main theme, although the 89-year-old Menahem Pressler's *La Dolce Volta* recording digs deeper in terms of drama and harmonic tension. In contrast to the deceptive simplicity and canny balances of Alfred Brendel's valedictory studio F major Sonata recording, Piemontesi's little breath pauses and clipped short notes in the first movement sound a tad micromanaged. He finds his focus with a steady, eloquently shaped *Andante cantabile*. One cannot fault Piemontesi's impeccable dynamic calibration and pointed fingerwork in the concluding *Allegretto*. Yet turn again to the Brendel recording, with its wistful evocation of a ghostly music box, and you're in a different world. Time will tell how Piemontesi's extremely capable, intelligently worked-out Mozart pianism will thrive in an overwhelmingly competitive catalogue. **Jed Distler**

Rondo, K511 – selected comparison:

Pressler (11/13) (DOLC) LDV12

Pf Son, K533/494 – selected comparison:

Brendel, r2008 (1/10) (DECC) 478 2116DH2

Nyman

'Chasing Planos'

Music from Carrington, The Claim, The Diary of Anne Frank, The Draughtsman's Contract, Drowning by Numbers, The End of the Affair, Gattaca, Man with a Movie Camera, The Piano, Wonderland and A Zed and Two Noughts

Valentina Lisitsa *pf*

Decca © 478 6421DH (78' • DDD)



Piano virtuoso and social media phenomenon

Valentina Lisitsa has ventured into new territory. At almost 78 minutes, 'Chasing Planos' provides one of the most comprehensive overviews to date of Michael Nyman's piano music from his film soundtracks.

There's much to commend in Lisitsa's performance. Her playing is controlled and effortless in the romantically charged pieces, such as 'The Heart Asks Pleasure First' from the successful score to *The Piano*, where the interplay between theme and countermelody is subtly brought to the surface. She also manages to capture the right mood in some of the lyrical, melody-driven pieces, such as 'Diary of Love' from *The End of the Affair* or 'If' from *The Diary of Anne Frank*. Such pieces certainly benefit from the pianist's knowledge and understanding of traditional repertoire.

Lisitsa's performances of 'minimalist' Nyman is less convincing, however. The heavy chords that punctuate the opening of 'Time Lapse' sound thick and stodgy, and the pianist's attempts to ratchet up the tension throughout its five-minute span only serve to make the ending hysterical and overblown. Sally Whitwell's visceral rendition of the same piece on 'All Imperfect Things' is far more effective (ABC Classics, 5/14). Likewise, Lisitsa fails to capture the English folk-pastoral quality that underpins 'Sheep 'n' Tides'.

At times her performances drive the music almost to a standstill, and the sequence of pieces from *The Piano* that rounds off the disc sounds sluggish and off-colour. The rhythmic power and precision of Lisitsa's playing is certainly in evidence in 'Fly Drive', 'Chasing Sheep' and 'Here to There', and matches the romantic poise that animates much of the recording, but such bursts of high energy only momentarily invigorate. **Pwyll ap Siôn**

Schubert

Piano Sonatas – No 14, D784; No 19, D958; No 20, D959^a; No 21, D960^a

Paul Lewis *pf*

Harmonia Mundi © ② HMC90 2165/6 (129' • DDD)

^aRecorded 2002, from HMC90 1800 (5/03)



Just to clarify, this latest Schubert release is a mix of Paul Lewis old and new. The last

two sonatas are reissues of his recordings from 2002; D784 and D958, which featured on his debut disc for Harmonia Mundi in 2001, have been re-recorded. It makes for fascinating and irresistible comparison. The finale of D784 sounds positively polite compared with what he does to it now. There's a greater revealing of the seething anger that underpins this most desolate of sonatas. Lewis is a more rhetorical, self-assured artist than he was in his late twenties; in terms of emotional heft, this new reading can sit very happily alongside those of Lupu, Pires and Brendel.

That rhetorical power is put to tremendous use in D958: what previously sounded troubling is now cataclysmic. And he's unashamed of pointing up the similarities with Beethoven. Even in a movement such as the finale of the same sonata, which hasn't necessarily changed in conception, the details are telling, with smoother, less bouncy phrasing, to more malevolent effect. In the slow movement too, his reading now seems more informed by playing the song-cycles; what in the



Incise brilliance: Jenny Lin makes an all-too-rare journey into the piano works of Igor Stravinsky, which aren't always as percussive as may be presumed

earlier performance was merely sad has much more colour, more layering, the emotion more searing. And that's helped by the fact that he now has a better-regulated instrument and a much less boomy acoustic than before.

So good are these new readings that it seems a shame that he wasn't able to re-record D959 and D960 as well. It's not that they're not good: at their best they are very fine indeed. It's simply that Lewis has matured into a much more outgoing, rhetorical artist. The first movement of D960 now seems a little fidgety alongside those of Andsnes, Uchida or Brendel – full of incident, yes, but not quite scaling the heights as he now does in concert. But it's in the slow movements that I feel most has changed. Again, in concert, the outburst in D959 is these days devastating; on his recording it's still a little reined in. The third movement of the same sonata is wonderfully played, though the piano is a little tinny in its uppermost reaches. So a slightly mixed affair. But the new recordings reaffirm that Lewis is one of the great Schubertians of our time. **Harriet Smith**

Pf Son No 14, D784 – selected comparisons:

Lupu (5/71st, 3/06) (DECC) 475 7074DC4

Brendel (11/88th, 3/06) (PHIL.) 475 7191PX2

Pires (2/90) (DG) 427 769-2GH

Nos 14, D784 & 19, D958 – selected comparison:

Lewis, r2001 (3/02) (HARM) HMA195 1755

Nos 19–21, D958–960 – selected comparisons:

Brendel (11/72nd, 3/73rd, 4/73rd, 5/94)

(PHIL.) 438 703-2PM2

Uchida (9/98th) (PHIL.) 475 6282PB8

Andsnes (8/02nd, 4/05th, 7/07th) (EMI) 516448-2

Stravinsky

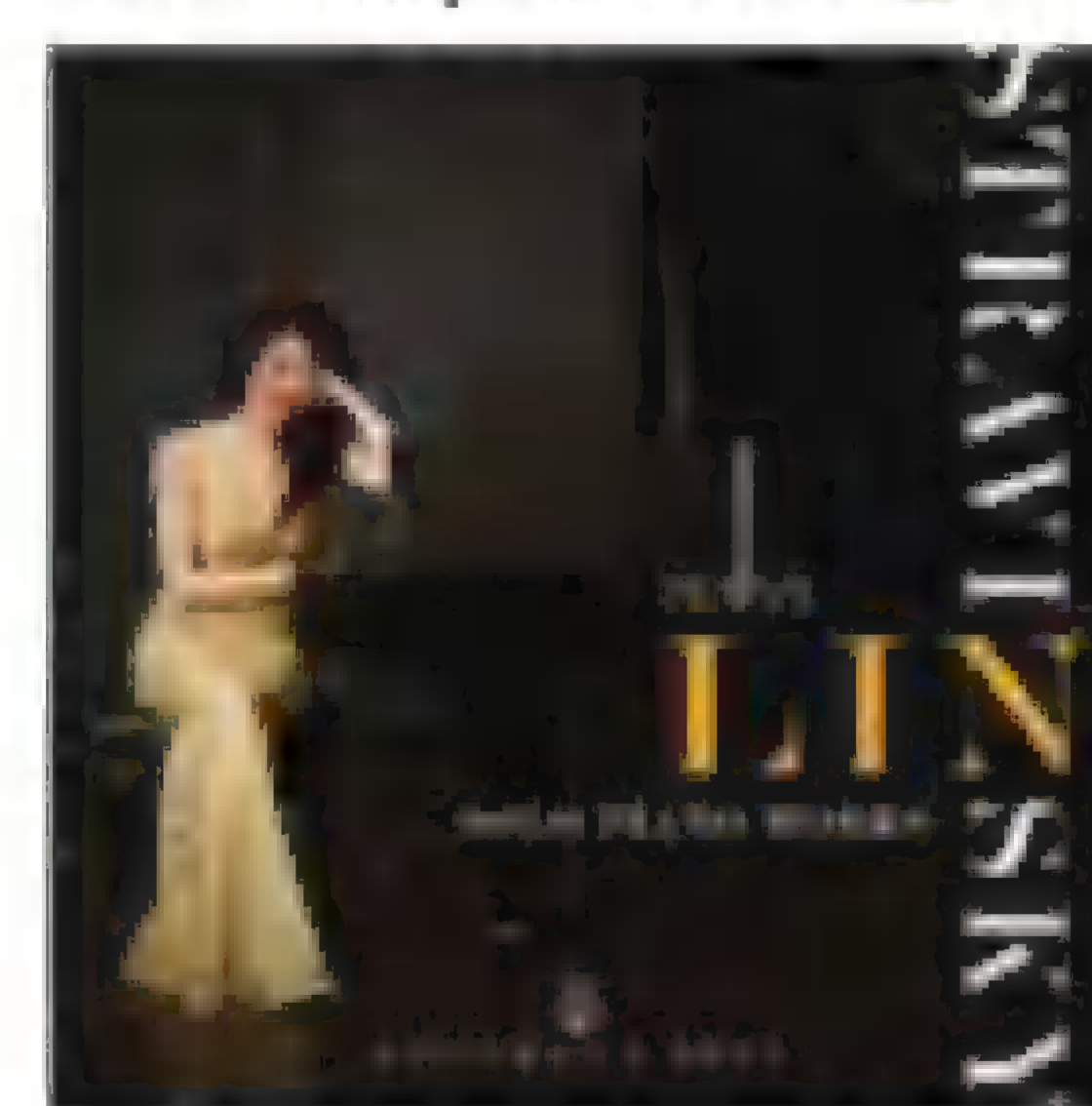
'Solo Piano Works'

Circus Polka. The Firebird – Suite (arr Agosti).

Four Etudes, Op 7. Piano-Rag-Music. Piano Sonata. Polka. Prologue to Mussorgsky's 'Boris Godunov'. Ragtime. Serenade in A. Two Sketches of a Sonata. Tango. Valse

Jenny Lin *pf*

Steinway & Sons © STNS30028 (64' • DDD)



Weighed against the great orchestral scores, Stravinsky's works for solo piano form a minor part of his output. Few works beyond the *Three Dances from Petrushka* are heard at all frequently and discs entirely devoted to his smaller-scale keyboard works are comparatively rare (I have not heard Martin Jones's highly praised 1996 two-CD survey on Nimbus, nor Giacomo

Franci's 2012 Fonè disc of almost the entire solo works).

Lin demonstrates triumphantly what we – and, not incidentally, her fellow pianists – encounter too infrequently. Stravinsky may have regarded the piano primarily as a percussion instrument but in the early works he has not moved on that far from Mussorgsky, his teacher Rimsky-Korsakov and, in the Four Etudes (1908), Scriabin. It is the complex polyrhythms of the latter work that present the greatest problem for the performer. Lin brings an incisive brilliance to these little masterpieces, as she does to the outer movements of the 1924 Sonata. In the same vein, the four-movement 1925 Serenade, inspired by dance forms, deserves to be better known – 'gentle neo-classicism with a wink' (Ben Finane in his excellent booklet).

Ragtime is heard in the composer's own transcription (great fun), wittily characterised by Lin, like the other short works here. She concludes with a blazing performance of Guido Agosti's cripplingly difficult 1928 transcription of three movements from *The Firebird*. Another superbly recorded Steinway disc, and another notable achievement from this gifted and imaginative artist.

Jeremy Nicholas

Sumsion

'The Complete Organ Works
of Herbert Sumsion, Vol 1'

Canzona. Ceremonial March. Chorale Preludes –
Down Ampney; Dundee; Liebster Immanuel;
Down Ampney. Elegy. Introduction and Theme.
Pastoral. Prelude. Preludes – Adeste fideles;
The Coventry Carol; The holly and the ivy;
Unto us is born a Son. Quiet Postlude. Toccata
on 'University'. Variations on a Folk Tune

Daniel Cook *org*

Priory © PRCD1075 (76' • DDD)

Played on the organ of Salisbury Cathedral

Sumsion

'The Complete Organ Works
of Herbert Sumsion, Vol 2'

JS Bach Komm, süßer Tod (arr Sumsion) **Elgar**
The Dream of Gerontius (arr Brewer) – Prelude;
Softly and gently. Chanson de matin, Op 15 No 2
Sumsion Air, Berceuse and Procession.

Allegretto. Cradle Song. Intermezzo.

Prelude and Aria. Sarabande and Interlude

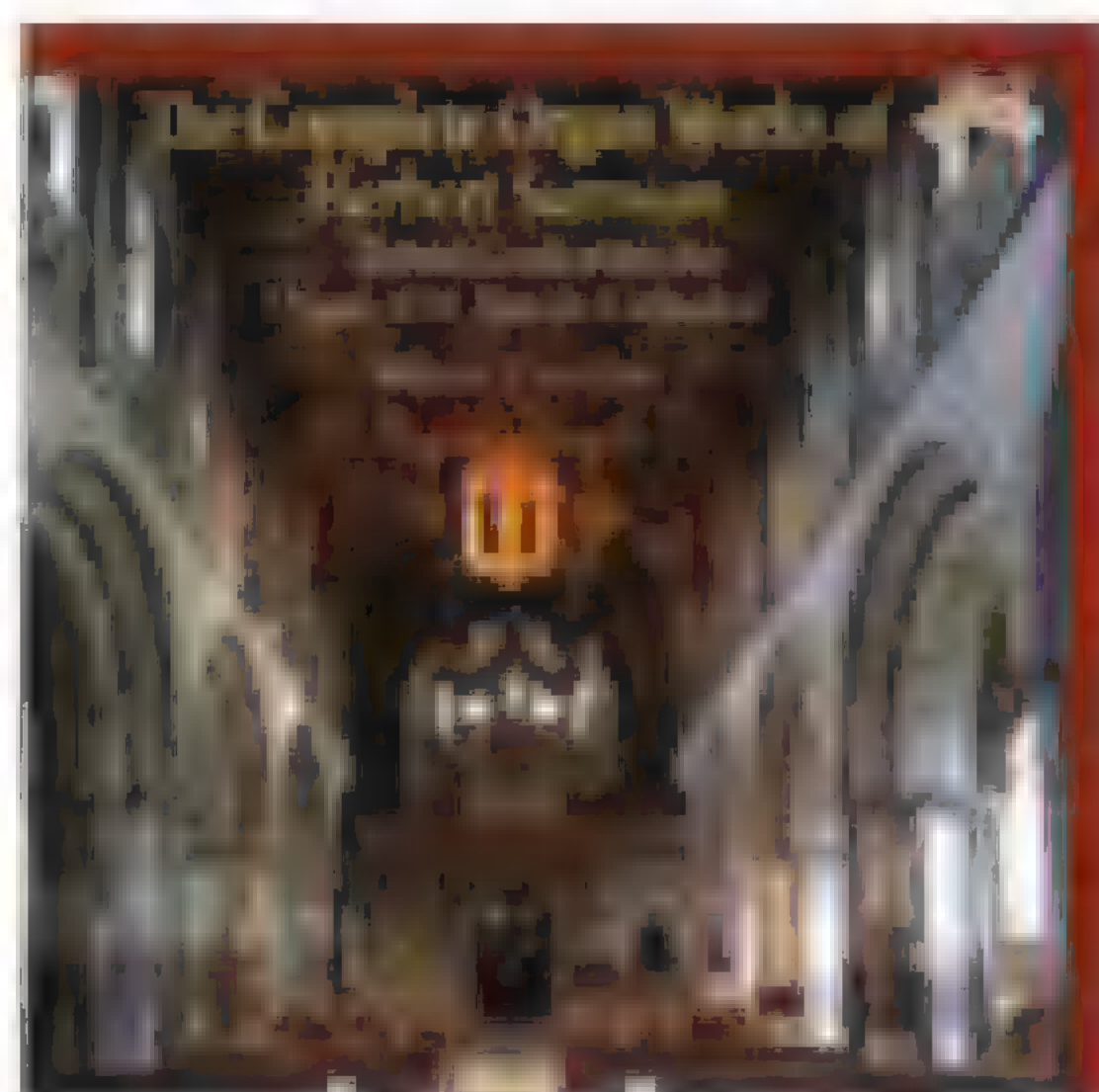
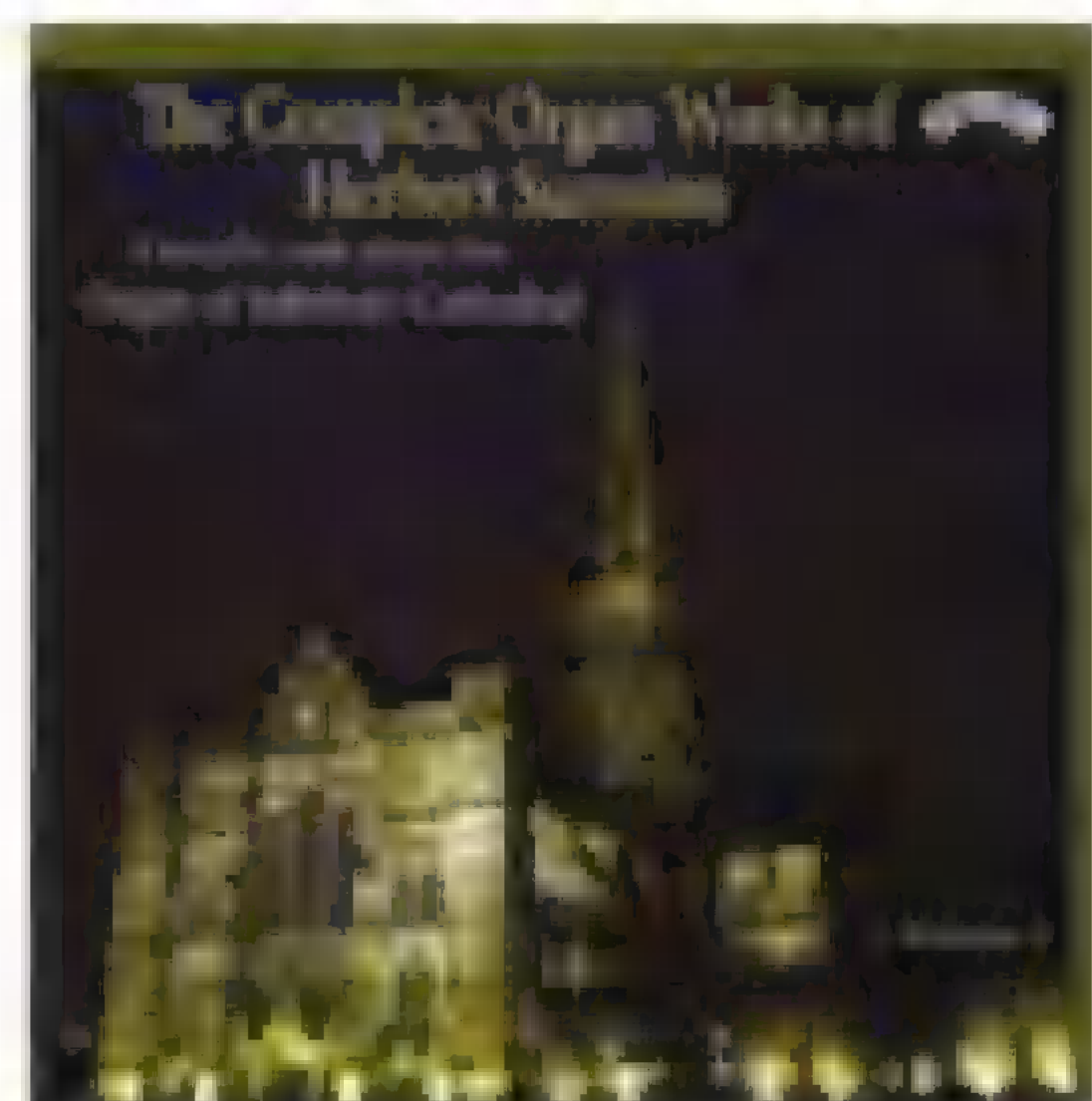
Vaughan Williams Carol. Dominus regit me.

Eventide. Musette (all arr Sumsion)

Daniel Cook *org*

Priory © PRCD1093 (76' • DDD)

Played on the organ of St Davids Cathedral



Over the years Priory Records has honoured a wide range of composers in its benchmark 'Complete Organ Works' series by recording sympathetic artists on tonally appropriate instruments. The ranks of Gigout, Howells, Jongen, Karg-Elert, Parry, Saint-Saëns and Whitlock are now joined by one of the more neglected English organist-composers of the 20th century, Herbert Sumsion (1899-1995).

Vol 1 was recorded on the glorious 'Father' Willis in Salisbury Cathedral in 2011, an instrument that provides the perfect blend of warmth and sparkle for this quintessentially English repertory, which Cook despatches with bonhomie and nobility in equal measure. He presents Sumsion's oeuvre in reverse order, opening with two of his last published compositions from the 1980s and concluding with his earliest work, the Introduction and Theme in B minor, which, when published in 1936, established him as a composer of the first rank. This recital piece is imbued with a dramatic intensity which burned with a less frequent intensity in Sumsion's subsequent organ music. However, while never a radical innovator, his music flows with consummate ease, revealing a mastery of

textural balance, a delight in variation form and a satisfyingly harmonic richness. Most beguiling is the delicious Prelude on 'The holly and the ivy'.

Vol 2 offers a further half a dozen original works, the Sarabande and Interlude showing the influence of his friend Howells, while the most substantial piece is the *Air, Berceuse and Procession* of 1960, almost a sonata *manqué*. A keen recycler of earlier material, Sumsion's *Prelude and Aria* of 1940 started out 10 years earlier as an orchestral overture, *In the Cotswolds*. The harmonic piquancy of the delightful Allegretto is beautifully matched by the tone colours of the organ in St Davids Cathedral, which is essentially a Willis of 1883, last rebuilt by Harrison and Harrison in 2000. The rest of the disc is padded out with arrangements of music by Vaughan Williams and Elgar transcriptions made by Herbert Brewer, Sumsion's predecessor at Gloucester. Unlikely to be bettered.

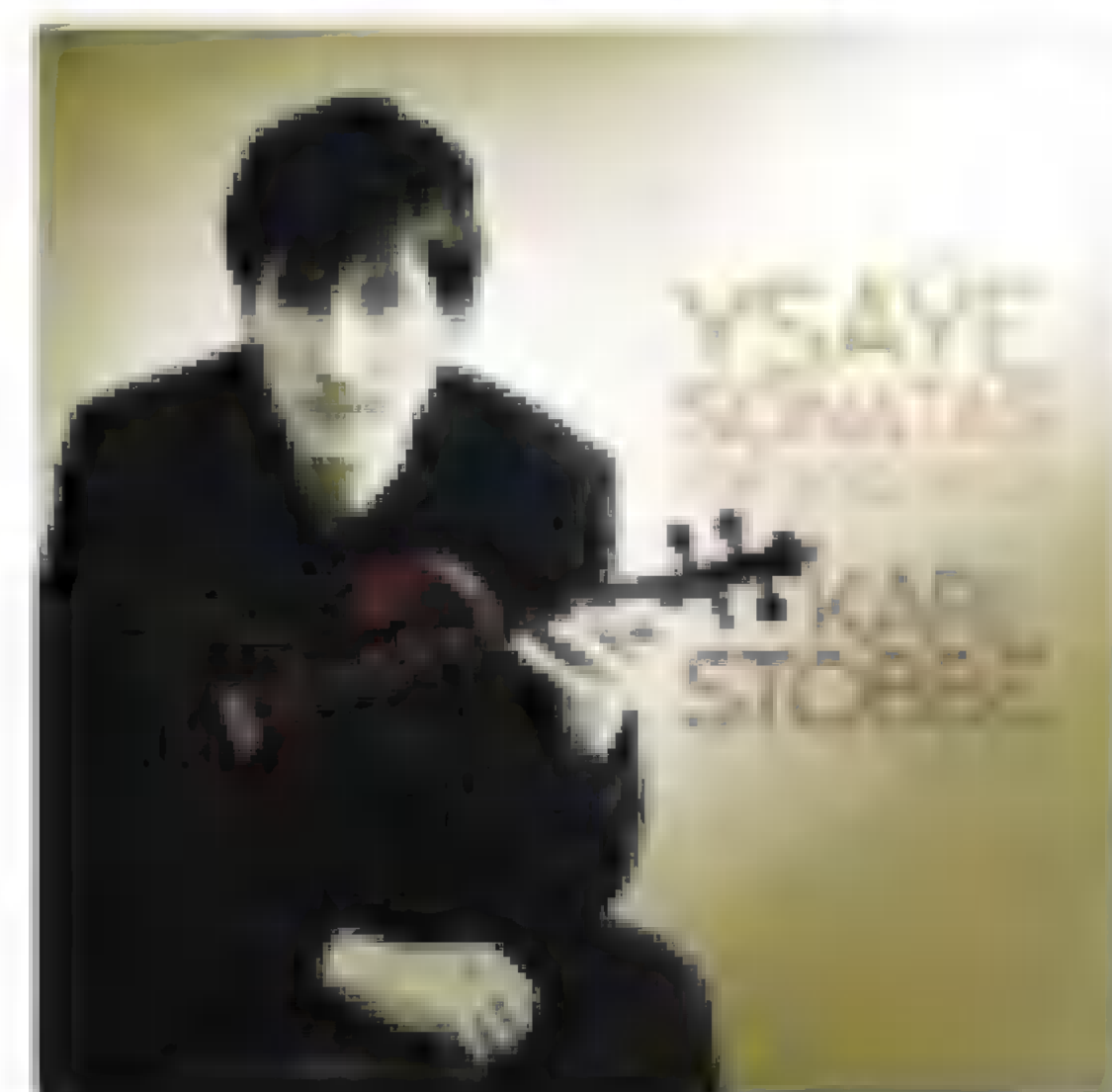
Malcolm Riley

Ysaÿe

Six Solo Violin Sonatas, Op 27

Karl Stobbe *vn*

Avie © AV2310 (62' • DDD)



Ysaÿe's Solo Violin Sonatas explore the instrument's capabilities in an entirely original way. The score of the Sonatas has meticulous indications for bowing and fingering, making it clear how every bar was conceived with the violin to hand. With such precision, it's surprising what different approaches we can hear on record.

Karl Stobbe stays close to the text, giving strongly projected performances that are full of spirit and energy. He approaches the high virtuosity of the Sixth Sonata in an exciting, fearless manner; it's an account with enormous momentum. Similarly, he creates a powerful sense of narrative in the Third Sonata, subtitled 'Ballade'. There are one or two less attractive features of the set: the recording is close, and at quite a high level, contributing to a lack of really quiet playing. The opening of the Fifth Sonata, depicting dawn breaking, lacks the magic memorably captured by Leonidas Kavakos. And the parenthetical Bach quotations in the Second Sonata's first movement, marked *piano*, aren't sufficiently contrasted with the rest of the music. Another problem concerns Stobbe's chord-playing: most loud spread chords are attacked quite fiercely, creating an aggressive effect (I was

taught, by a pupil of one of these Sonatas' dedicatees, to reserve the loudest sound for the moment when the bow crosses to the higher notes). By and large, however, Stobbe has the measure of this music, plus all the necessary enthusiasm and technique to present it convincingly.

Duncan Druce

Selected comparison:

Kavakos (BIS) BIS-CD1046

Myung-Whun Chung

Beethoven Bagatelle, 'Für Elise', WoO59 **Chopin**

Nocturnes – No 8, Op 27 No 2; No 20, Op *posth*

Debussy Suite bergamasque – Clair de lune

Mozart Variations on 'Ah! vous dirai-je, maman',

K265 **Schubert** Impromptus, D899 – No 2; No 3

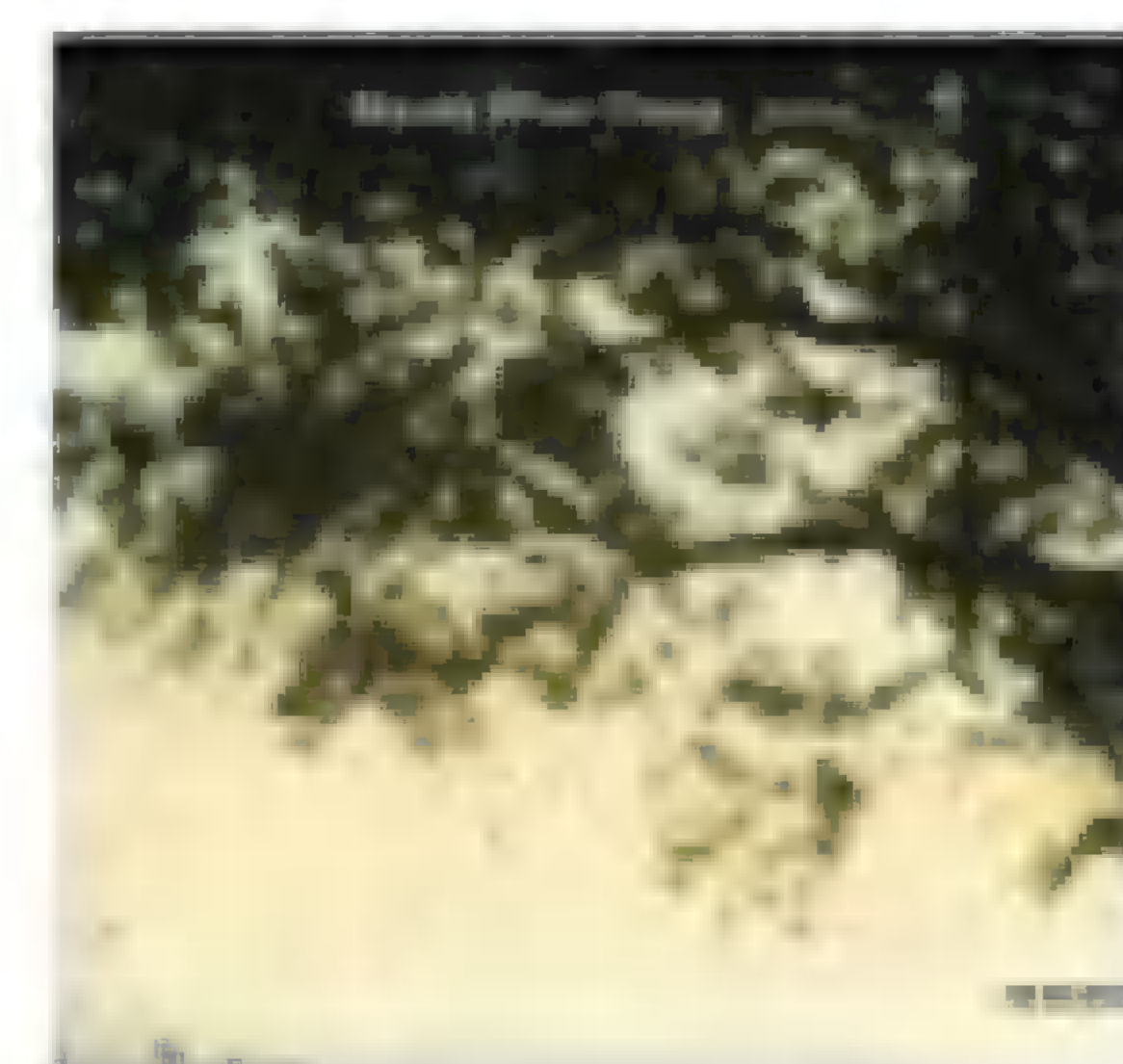
Schumann Arabesque, Op 18. Kinderszenen,

Op 15 – Träumerei **Tchaikovsky** The Seasons,

Op 37b – October (Autumn Song)

Myung-Whun Chung *pf*

ECM New Series © 481 0765 (55' • DDD)



Myung-Whun Chung is better known these days as a conductor.

But he began his career as a pianist, winning joint second prize at the 1974 International Tchaikovsky Competition and forming a trio with his sisters. Now aged 61, he doesn't consider himself a 'real' pianist any more but 'the idea that my grandchildren would be able to hear this music from my heart was very appealing' (his booklet-note).

The pieces he has chosen will be familiar to anyone who has studied the piano up to Grade 7 or 8. While there is nothing to tax more than a moderate technique, each piece demands refined musicianship to bring off convincingly. The first bars of 'Clair de lune', bathed in a haze of pedal, make it clear that forward momentum is not one of Chung's chief concerns. Here and elsewhere his leisurely tempi frequently stretch the musical lines to breaking point ('Träumerei', C sharp minor Nocturne), while Schubert's G flat Impromptu at 7'38" is likely to sound somnolent to those who grew up with Schnabel and Fisher (4'53" and 4'59" respectively). Yet Chung produces such a soothingly rich tone (beautifully recorded in La Fenice, Venice) and such long singing phrases that it is hard not to be entranced by the sincerity and tender introspection of this recital, a lullaby as much as a souvenir for his grandchildren, enlivened by the nimbly executed E flat Impromptu and Mozart Variations. **Jeremy Nicholas**

Julius Katchen

Beethoven Rondo a capriccio, 'Rage over a lost penny', Op 129. Variations on an Original Theme, WoO80 **Brahms** Piano Pieces – Op 116; Op 118. Scherzo, Op 4 **Chopin** Ballade No 3, Op 47. Berceuse, Op 57. Nocturnes – No 2, Op 9 No 2; No 8, Op 27 No 2 **Liszt** Piano Sonata, S178 **Schumann** Waldszenen, Op 82 – No 7, Vogel als Prophet

Julius Katchen *pf*

Audite Ⓟ ② AUDITE21 419 (108' • DDD)

Recorded 1962, 1964



Audite's two-CD set of recordings made for RIAS Berlin in 1962 and 1964 adds several first issues to Julius Katchen's discography (including the Liszt Sonata and Chopin's Berceuse), confirming his status as an elemental virtuoso. And if, as he himself put it, a pianist's greatest challenge lies in the fluent communication of emotion to his audience, then virtually all these performances tell you why he was lionised in Europe in general and Paris in particular, where he made his home for the greater part of his life. Katchen could not only communicate but engulf his audience with a voltage and exuberance that could pin you back by the ears.

True, his lavish style, his fulsomeness and coloration will hardly appeal to a puritan taste. He had little time for musical discretion or propriety. Few pianists have given such free rein to their feelings and imagination, and his Liszt Sonata, even in today's crowded marketplace, is among the most glittering and awe-inspiring on record. Hear him in the flourish at 7'03", a flash of lightning down the keyboard, but hear him also in the slow descending scales at the close of the central *Andante* or in the valedictory coda, and you will be made aware of a pianist who could change with chameleon rapidity from an all-guns-firing brio to a sense of the sonata's still, elusive centre.

He takes Brahms (always a speciality) by storm, too, and if there are moments (in the E flat minor Scherzo) where his volatility overwhelms the music's content, making for listening more exhausting than exhilarating, Katchen's glowing *cantabile*, backed by a charismatic theatricality, makes his Chopin a glamorous alternative to a more patrician approach, his *rubato* heady and alluring. There is delicacy and poetry in Schumann's 'Prophet Bird', making these finely recorded discs a thrilling confirmation of Katchen's stature, of a pianist whose tragic death at the age of 42 robbed the world of a unique personality. **Bryce Morrison**

'The Hidden Violin'

Godard Solo Violin Sonatas – No 1, Op 20; No 2, Op *posth* **Joachim** Scottish Melody **Saint-Lubin** Fantasy on a Theme from Lucia di Lammermoor, Op 46 **Sinding** Suite, Op 123 – Chaconne **Vecsey** Prelude and Fugue

Vaughan Jones *vn*

First Hand Ⓟ FHR29 (58' • DDD)



Vaughan Jones has his hands full with this repertoire. Rare (for which read 'obscure')

music for violin from the late 19th and early 20th centuries is his speciality, and this disc represents work he does on the exploration, arrangement and transcription of this lesser-spotted repertoire. Like most music for solo violin presented as suites or sonatas, Bach casts his long shadow over many of them. And although they may not display the originality or depth of, for instance, Ysaÿe's own examples, the two career-spanning sonatas of Benjamin Godard are a good example of a diverting snapshot in time. They offer a sentimentality amplified in the monomaniacal sonata of his Norwegian contemporary Christian Sinding and completely absent in the curiously sociopathic music of Franz von Vecsey.

And that is the problem with this obliquely accomplished disc. It is an awkward group of pieces: Jones may be a specialist in the research and resurrection of obscure music for violin but even he needed the big guns here. They're probably most honestly presented in the rustic terms in which they were conceived but would have benefited enormously from presentation on the wings of a great instrument that can flesh out the ideas their composers had and, sadly, don't get the chance here. That's not to say that its performance on an instrument of sweet but two-dimensional tone (played to its best potential by Jones) in studio acoustics that rob the music of the resonance it desperately needs means there isn't enormous value in a recording such as this, though – a memoir of a fading repertoire, placed down with great care by technically pristine playing.

Caroline Gill

'The Merton Organ'

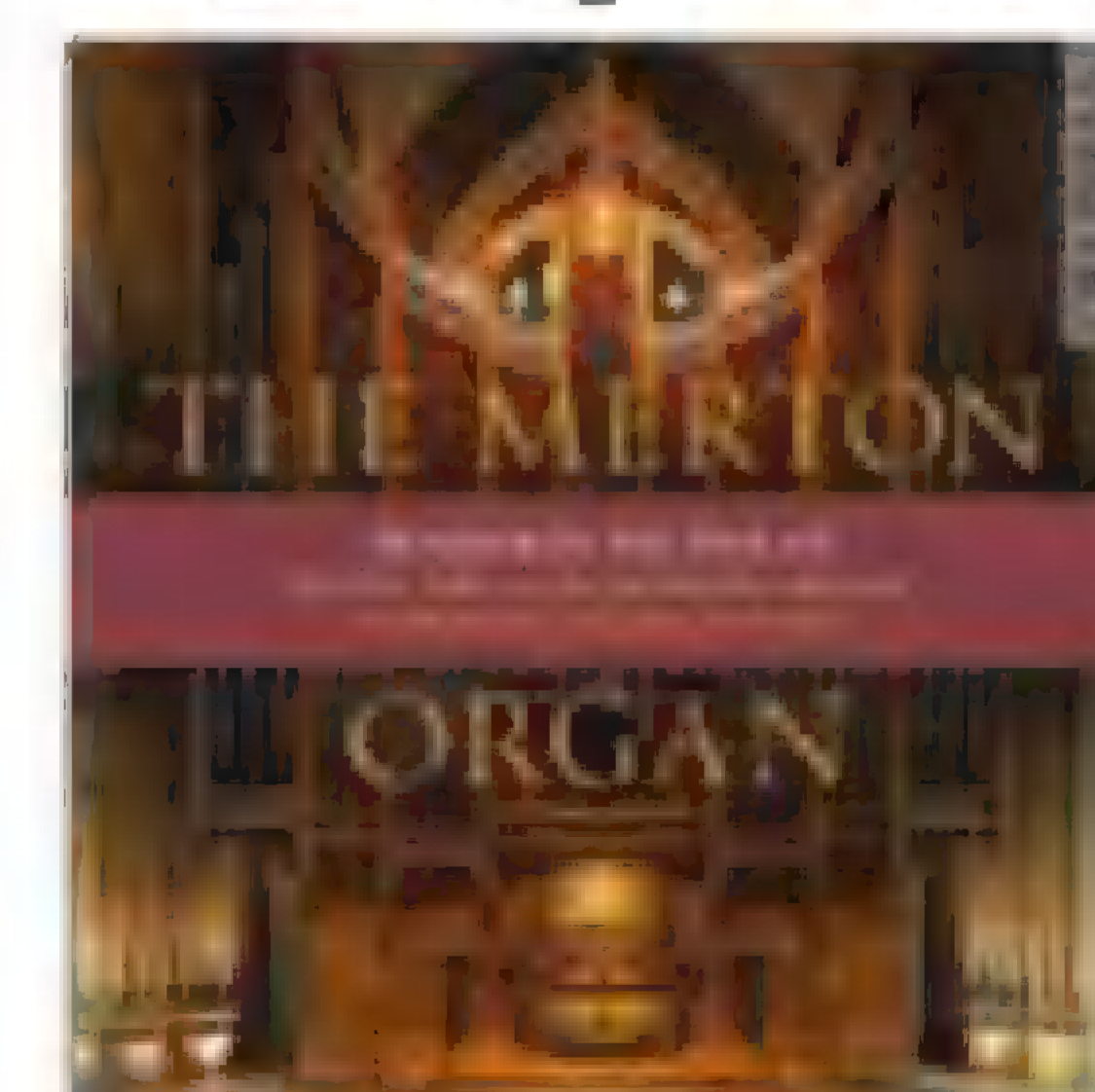
JS Bach Cantata No 22 – 'Ertödt uns durch dein' Gute' (arr Duruflé). Cantata No 29 – Sinfonia (arr Dupré). Toccata and Fugue, BWV565 **Dupré** Cortège et Litanie **Franck** Pièce héroïque **Langlais** Dialogue sur les mixtures **Mendelssohn** Andante and Variations

Messiaen Prière après la Communion

Stanley Voluntary, Op 6 No 2 **Vierne** Clair de lune. Carillon de Westminster

Benjamin Nicholas *org*

Delphian Ⓟ DCD34142 (72' • DDD). Played on the Dobson organ of Merton College, Oxford



All the main suspects are here: Bach, Franck, Vierne, Messiaen.

Sometimes they pair up – the disc opens with Marcel Dupré's grandiose reworking of a Bach Sinfonia; the French outnumber the Germans by six to two; there is just one Briton; and the vast bulk of the music dates from the late 19th/early 20th centuries. This is not a disc to seek out on repertoire alone. If you like organ music, you will already have versions of just about everything here. Neither is it a disc which offers anything notable in the way of interpretative insight, the two Bach transcriptions, along with the *Pièce héroïque*, possessing a somewhat pedestrian quality as they revisit their very familiar pathways. Benjamin Nicholas is a highly competent player and one as prepared as anyone to display virtuosity.

But this disc does have its USP. This full-bodied recording captures an instrument of real musical worth which, bucking the trend of looking to continental Europe, is unequivocally English. Completed this year, the organ of Merton College, Oxford, looks and sounds gloriously familiar to all of us brought up in the English tradition. The organ was, however, built by an American company – the Dobson Pipe Organ Builders of Iowa – and, as one of its vice presidents writes in the booklet, 'The opportunity to design and construct an organ for a building so steeped in history almost never comes to an American company'. It's a wonderful instrument, happily meeting the demands of any repertoire, and it is this which is the undoubted star of this lovely new recording. **Marc Rochester**

'Scandale'

Ravel La valse **Rimsky-Korsakov** Sheherazade – The Kalender Prince **Stravinsky** The Rite of Spring **Tristano** A Soft Shell Groove
Alice Sara Ott, Francesco Tristano *pfs*
DG Ⓟ 479 2398GH (62' • DDD)



The disc's title and *raison d'être* escape me: 'Scandale' says the cover in shocking



Chants nostalgiques

Godowsky • Kreisler/Rachmaninov • Schubert/Liszt
Silvestri • Tárrega
Luiza Borac, piano

An ingenious combination of song transcriptions including several premieres: Liszt arrangements of classic Schubert lieder, Rachmaninov's takes on Kreisler, Luiza's own transcription of Tárrega's timeless *Recuerdos de la Alhambra*, the first recording of the title track by Constantin Silvestri, and a revelatory first release of historical recordings by legendary Romanian tenor Ion Buzea, supplemented with Luiza's present-day piano.



AV 2316

Brahms, Rózsa Clarinet Sonatas

Jean Johnson, clarinet
Steven Osborne, piano

Husband-and-wife team Jean Johnson and Steven Osborne come together in Brahms' popular Clarinet Sonatas, whilst Jean solos in the rarely heard Sonata and Sonatina by Miklós Rózsa.



AV 2311

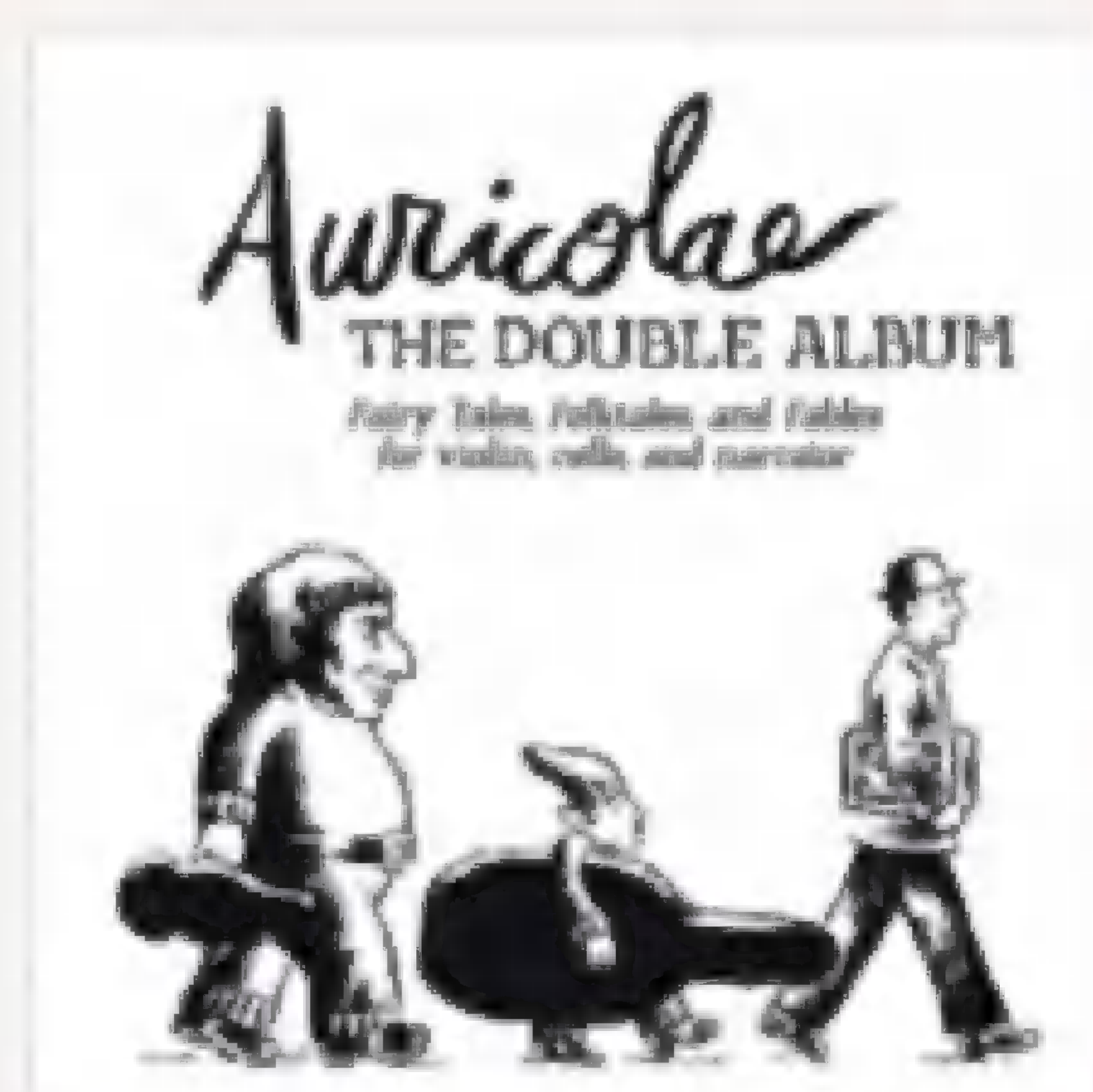
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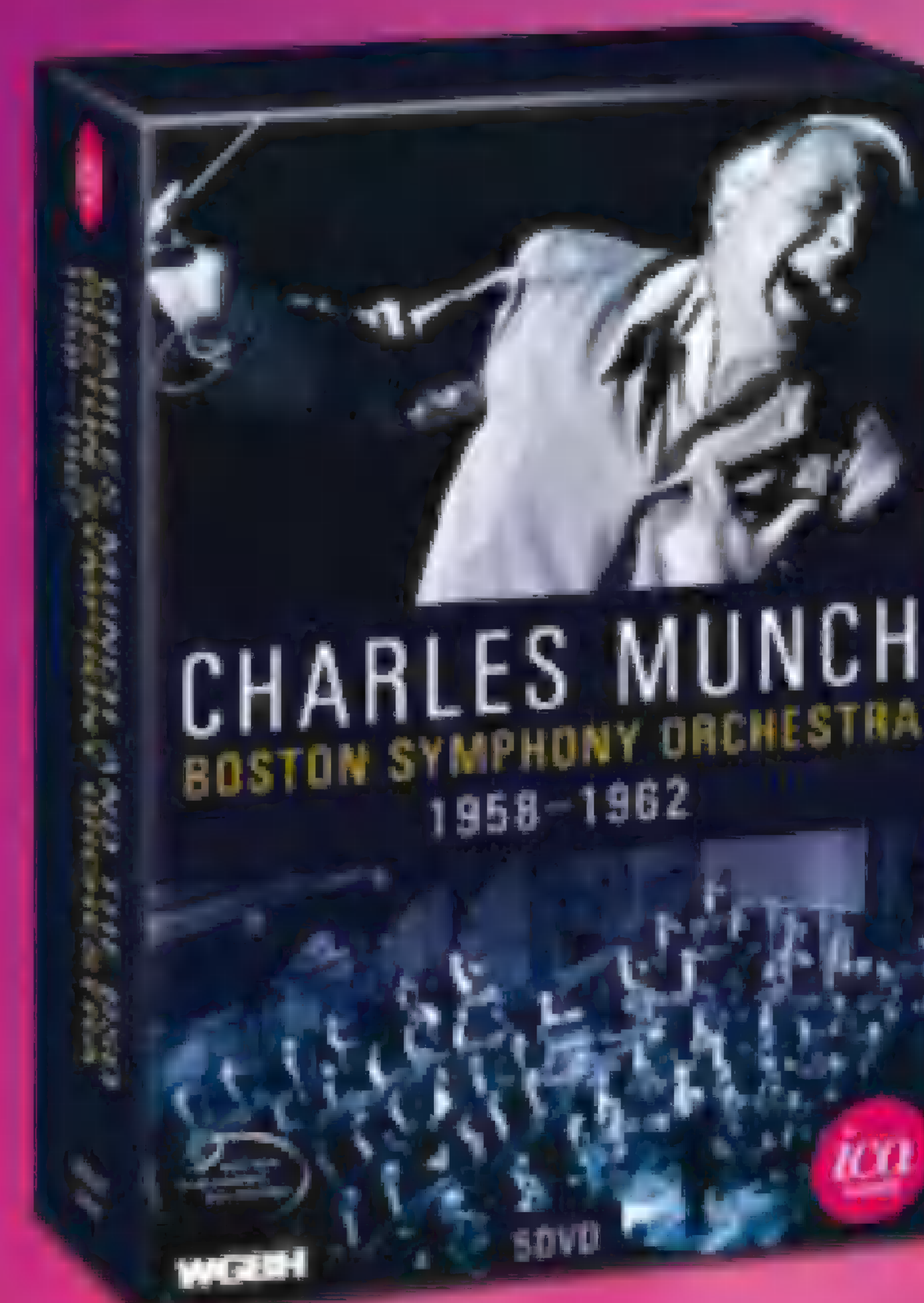
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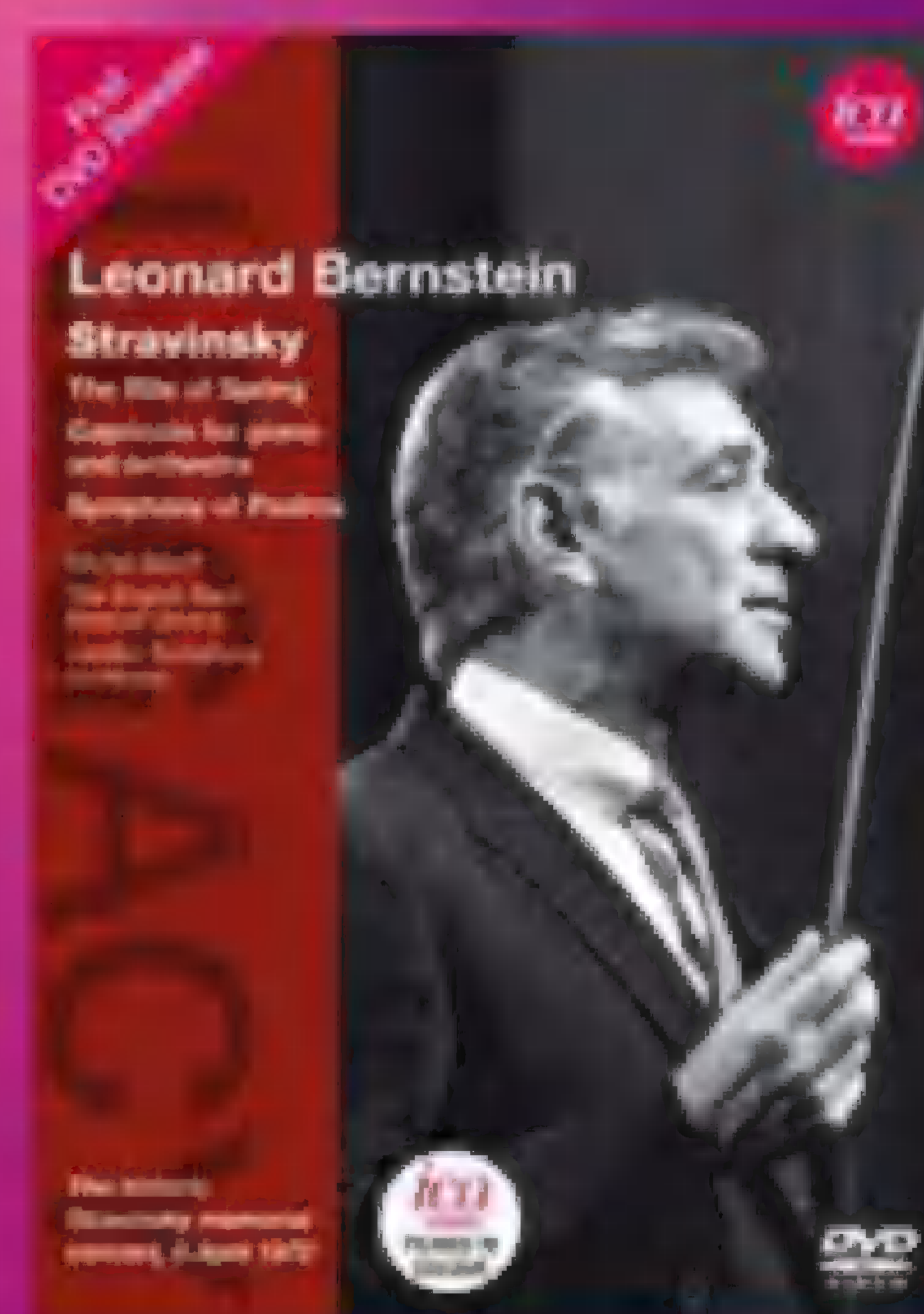
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pink. The 'Rite of Spring' premiere is presumably the eponymous 'scandale', but Rimsky-Korsakov's *Sheherazade*? Ravel's *La valse*? Rimsky's widow objected fiercely to Diaghilev using the former as a ballet and Ravel never spoke to the impresario again after he refused to turn it into a ballet. Hardly scandals. The booklet bleats about both performers being 'keen to return to a starting point that is free from expectations and in doing so they allow themselves – scandalously so – to create something entirely new'.

Better to ignore such waffle and enjoy these dance pieces at face value, the performances and recording of which are terrific. If it is hard to forget Stravinsky's orchestration, the sections of motoric rhythm in his two-piano version of *The Rite* seem made for the percussive character of the instrument, while some of the slower passages reveal more so than in their original garb the challenging harmonic language that so provoked the first audiences. 'The Kalender Prince' by Stravinsky's teacher in his own duet version provides lyrical contrast before *La valse*, deftly, brilliantly executed, the final pages more dogged and relentless than the increasingly frantic view taken by the thrilling Argerich and her many different waltzing partners. The final piece is the world premiere of Tristano's *A Soft Shell Groove* which, with its foot-tapping (literally) rhythm, is bound to find many friends among listeners and other two-piano teams. **Jeremy Nicholas**

'A Tribute to Oscar Peterson'

Andrew Litton *pf* plays

Oscar Peterson improvisations

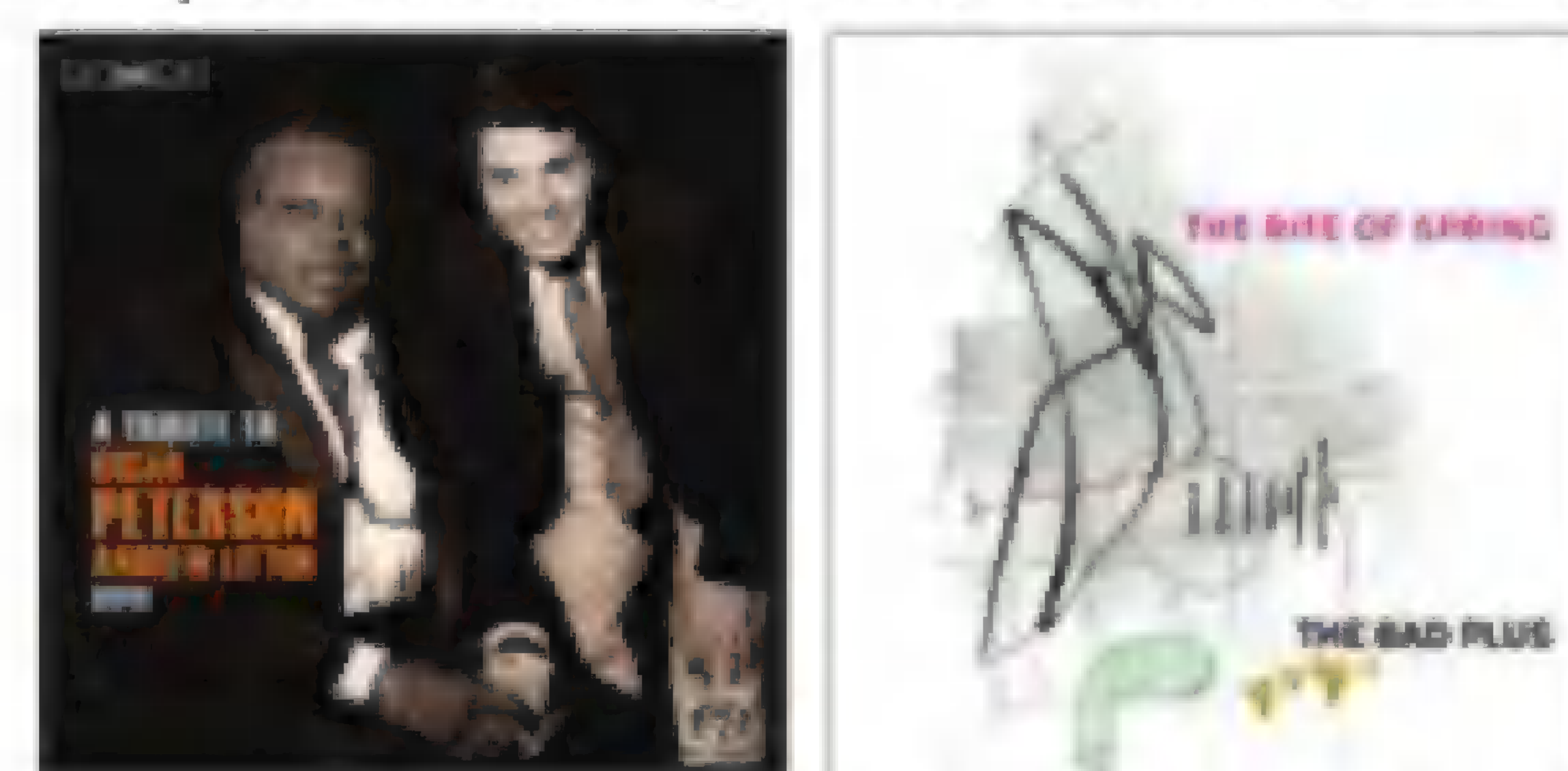
BIS Ⓢ BIS2034 (54' • DDD/DSD)

Stravinsky

The Rite of Spring

The Bad Plus

Sony Masterworks Ⓢ 88843 02405-2 (39' • DDD)



Andrew Litton plays transcriptions of improvisations by the much-loved jazz pianist Oscar Peterson; The Bad Plus perform what is termed 'an arrangement' of Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring*. Litton is a classical conductor who regularly directs Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue* from the piano; The Bad Plus are a contemporary piano-bass-drums jazz trio, of the type popularised by Peterson, who have become

renowned for their punky, rambunctious remakes of pop songs.

Litton interprets music that was originally improvised while The Bad Plus, improvisers by instinct, interpret a score. And somewhere in the back of Oscar Peterson's mind as he was improvising on Thelonious Monk's 'Round midnight', Billy Strayhorn's 'Take the "A" train' and Juan Tizol's 'Perdido' was an idea about the original source. Strayhorn's composition became Duke Ellington's signature theme tune and Peterson's recasting was packed with a lifetime's worth of thoughts and associations, the jittery momentum of his improvisation derived partly from needing to contain so much activity within a three-minute duration – finger-busting Harlem stride piano slamming into windows of impressionistic repose.

But, transcribed and now interpreted, that familiar energy is killed stone dead and what remains is a sequence of well-behaved mood pieces. Is there any gain? The structural integrity of Peterson's improvisations, now flattened out like a spatchcock chicken, becomes unambiguously clear. But jazz fans will find Litton's schooled touch and rhythmic squareness a complete anathema.

The Bad Plus have the opposite problem. Personally, I'd much rather they'd given us a 're-Rite' that reclaimed Stravinsky's rhythmic mantras and melodic turns of phrase as the basis for improvisation. As matters stand, the arrangement feels overly literal. True enough, hearing bassist Reid Anderson making Stravinsky's woodwind figurations work on his instrument is genuinely startling; and some of the most exciting moments are triggered when drummer David King is let off the leash and, as in 'Spring Rounds', underpins Stravinsky's rhythmic grid with patterns that reconnect us to the rhythmic alchemy of modern jazz drum masters like Elvin Jones and Sunny Murray.

But the limitations soon become obvious. Finding an equivalent for Stravinsky's introductory bassoon melody clearly proved difficult and pianist Ethan Iverson emerges through ambient, 1990s sounding electronics – and whatever else you do to *The Rite*, it should never sound dated or ambient. These two albums arriving together reminded me of an old Tommy Cooper joke. A chap who thinks he's having a lucky day when he finds a Rembrandt and a Stradivarius comes back to earth with a bump when the realisation dawns he's got a Rembrandt violin and a Stradivarius painting – 'Rembrandt made rubbish violins...' **Phillip Clark**

'Wild Dreams'

Bartók Out of Doors, Sz81 **Hindemith** In einer Nacht, Op 15 – No 1, Müdigkeiten; No 2, Sehr langsam; No 6, Sehr lebhaft, flimmernd; No 7, Nervosität, nicht schnell; No 8, Scherzo: Äusserst lebhaft **Rachmaninov** Piano Sonata No 2, Op 36 (1931 revision). Dreams, Op 38 No 5 (transcr Wild). Vocalise, Op 34 No 14 (transcr Wild) **Schumann** Fantasiestücke, Op 12

Joyce Yang *pf*

Avie Ⓢ AV2261 (79' • DDD)



Basing her recital around dream and night, Joyce Yang puts unlike alongside unlike

in a dream-like sequence, one where 'impulse trumps logic', as she describes it.

Particularly successful is her selection from Hindemith's *In einer Nacht*, which ranges in mood from spare and almost unmoving to sharply satirical, Yang's fingery technique making light work of the treacherous Nos 6 and 8. From there we're straight into Bartók's *Out of Doors*. Technically again she's impressive. But what her reading lacks is a degree of characterisation: the 'Barcarolla' lacks the tension Kocsis finds because it's too slow, while the Hungarian finds much greater unrest in 'Musettes'. Yang's final 'Chase' is tame indeed.

And by this time it's possible to trace a tendency in Yang's playing to play the slower music too slowly. 'Des Abends' and 'Fabel' in Schumann's *Fantasiestücke* are cases in point: Argerich or Hamelin inject much greater spontaneity into their readings. But the biggest caveats with this disc arise, unfortunately, with the main work, Rachmaninov's Second Sonata, played in its shorter revised version. Its opening loses that vital sense of inevitability, largely because Yang peppers it with *rubato*. I missed the robustness of Kocsis, the rhetoric of Sudbin, the life-or-death ardour of Horowitz. Yang's finale again lacks tumult. It's not simply about tempo: listen to Trpčeski, who certainly isn't Speedy Gonzales, to hear how his tauter phrasing gives the movement real drive. **Harriet Smith**

Bartók – selected comparison:

Kocsis (7/97⁸) (PHIL) 478 2364DB8

Schumann – selected comparisons:

Argerich (2/01) (EMI) 557101-2

Hamelin (1/06) (HYPE) CDA67120

Rachmaninov: Sonata – selected comparisons:

Horowitz [Horowitz ver] (11/71⁸, 7/94) (SONY) SK53472

Kocsis [orig ver] (2/96⁸) (PHIL) 475 7779POR

Trpčeski [1931 revision] (4/05) (EMI) 557943-2

Sudbin [Horowitz ver] (11/05) (BIS) BIS-SACD1518

Sir Peter Maxwell Davies

Celebrating his 80th birthday this year, the Master of the Queen's Music shows no sign of slowing down, writes Arnold Whittall

There are whole books to be compiled about the extraordinary diversity of the music written by British composers born during the 1930s; Alexander Goehr, Harrison Birtwistle, Peter Maxwell Davies, Nicholas Maw, Cornelius Cardew, Gordon Crosse, Jonathan Harvey – and that is only a partial list. Back in 1963, Goehr and Davies were already prominent enough to be included in Murray Schafer's *British Composers in Interview* (Faber & Faber): and the Davies section ended with the 29-year-old composer declaring that 'I want to communicate with the audience right away. But I must remain musically honest, and make no concessions to any debased or commercial taste.'

Half a century later, he would doubtless say the same, having invested much of his creative identity in constructivist techniques deriving ultimately from the Schoenbergian 12-note method. The resulting music has rarely been either dry or dull. But even in his Ken Russell phase, devising music for the films *The Devils* and *The Boy Friend* (both 1971), and with dramatic extravaganzas like *Eight Songs for a Mad King* and *Vesalii Icones* (both 1969) the foxtrots that blew apart the

'Davies's determination to challenge while not sinking into irrelevance has been consistent and intense'

striving counterpoints of his most characteristic textures were structurally disruptive devices, disconcerting rather than emollient. The Davies version of a pop song heard near the end of his opera *Resurrection* (1987) also reinforces the nightmarish surrealism of that work: musical honesty demanded that audiences should never be lulled into false security or complacency.

Being at odds with the establishment came naturally to a musically gifted working-class child born in the mid-20th century. Yet benefiting from the institutions associated with that 'establishment' – grammar schools, free university education – left Davies determined not only to teach but to root his creative work in aspects of the British early music heritage that could be shown to interact with those broader international and contemporary features found during his studies in Italy and America. His earliest compositions already possess a lyrical intensity distinguishing them from the terse fragmentation favoured by some older contemporaries, and that intensity has continued to determine the character of his huge and well-varied output. Even when – after a brief spell of full-time schoolteaching – he was working predominantly with the six musicians of the



Sir Peter Maxwell Davies: always striving for musical honesty

Pierrot Players (later called Fires of London), he was exploring larger orchestral and vocal forms, and the first main phase of his compositional development culminated in the full-length opera *Taverner* (1970).

Today, *Taverner* (begun in 1962) can be seen to have connected his early delight in expressionistic parody with a symphonic weightiness that echoes and elaborates Alban Berg's debt to Mahler. In Davies's opera the 16th-century composer John Taverner is not just at odds with the Tudor establishment but driven to distraction by his struggle to survive; and such a determined sense of struggle has continued to define Davies's musical aesthetic. The orchestral motet *Worldes blis* (1969) was the most extreme example of his early ambition to reconfigure symphonic music as a gigantic transformation of continuously proliferating instrumental lines derived from plainchant rather than from pithy Beethovenian motives, generating immense waves of tension that struggle to find any genuine sense of release. *Worldes blis* had an uncomfortable Proms premiere, and the cycle of compositions actually called a 'symphony' which Davies began four years later was not just a defiant reassertion of comparably uncompromising thinking: it was also a new take on the possibilities for fusion between aspects of traditional symphonic form and the musical language whose elements had underpinned most of his earlier works.

Many of Davies's symphonies were composed during his years on the Orkney Islands. The Second Symphony, in particular, uses imagery evoking that very location – 'a direct response to the ocean's extreme proximity' – and is also firmly committed to a newly-evolved understanding of tonality 'extended', the composer wrote, 'to form new methods of cohesion'. Even listeners who respond to such a vivid depiction of turbulence in the natural world can have difficulty in registering both the tonality and the cohesion

MAXWELL DAVIES FACTS

Born Salford, Greater Manchester, September 8, 1934

Early Education Leigh Grammar School, Royal Manchester College of Music and Manchester University

Teachers He benefited most from studies in Italy with Goffredo Petrassi (1957-8) and at Princeton University (1962-5) with Roger Sessions and Milton Babbitt

Other formative experiences

Contact at Manchester with Alexander Goehr, Harrison Birtwistle, Elgar Howarth and John Ogdon; working as Director of Music at Cirencester Grammar School (1959-62); co-founding the Pierrot Players (1967); moving to Orkney in 1971

Breakthrough works *Alma redemptoris mater* for wind sextet (1957); *O magnum mysterium* for choir, instrumental ensemble and organ (1960), written for performance at Cirencester

Credo 'Classical music cannot become a museum culture, however tempting such a proposition may be. All performers, to be really alive, must be in a constructive relationship with contemporary culture, and this means live composers.' (2005)

in this symphony. But there was no doubting the urgent sincerity of the composer's engagement with environmental issues (drilling for oil in the North Sea) and those longer-term regional aspects of folk music and puritanical religious observance that inform compositions like *Black Pentecost* (1979), *An Orkney Wedding, with Sunrise* (culminating in the appearance of a bagpipe player in full costume) and *The Beltane Fire* (1995).

Perhaps the most accessible and substantial of these enterprises is the sequence of 10 Strathclyde Concertos (1987-95) written for the Scottish Chamber Orchestra and named after the local authority that commissioned the series. Less monumental than the symphonies, and with a flexibility of form and style that encouraged the various soloists to rise to the highest levels of virtuosity, the Strathclyde Concertos were early beneficiaries of a contract between Davies and the Collins Classics recording company that saw timely CD releases of much of his later instrumental music under his own direction. The demise of Collins Classics and the collapse of the support network provided by the family of the composer's long-term business manager led to a period in which few recordings were released. But during his decade as Master of the Queen's Music (2004-14) the situation has improved, not least with the Naxos label's reissue of Collins Classics discs. Naxos was also behind the series of 10 string quartets written for the Maggini Quartet between 2002 and 2007, all speedily released in pairs on five CDs.

The 10 symphonies written between 1973 and 2014,

combined with the 10 Strathclyde Concertos and 10 Naxos Quartets provide a very substantial spine to the composer's output, but it is remarkable how many other significant and memorable works crop up after 1973. From magical chamber scores – *Ave Maris Stella* (1975), *A Mirror of Whitening Light* (1977), *Image, Reflection, Shadow* (1982) – to operas that have stood the test of time (most notably *The Lighthouse*) and choral works like the oratorio *Job* (1997) and the Mass (2002), the range has been phenomenal, the determination to challenge while not sinking into irrelevance consistent and intense. In a Royal Philharmonic Society lecture from 2005, near the start of his stint as Master of the Queen's Music, the composer chose the uncompromising title 'Will serious music become extinct?', and included the affirmation that 'perhaps religion has this in common with great art: it is not there to offer comfort but – *pace* King Lear – to make manifest "the mystery of things".' With the triumphant first performance of his Symphony No 10 in February 2014, composed under the shadow of life-threatening illness, Davies offered a powerful endorsement of the sense in which the struggles of a single creative artist – in the 10th Symphony, the great Renaissance architect Bernini – can serve and enhance that process of manifestation. In a heartfelt tribute to Michael Tippett on his 80th birthday, Davies wrote of that 'transcendent and visionary quality which is a continuing example...to all who care about the possibility of music today expressing man's highest aspirations'. In the year of his own 80th birthday, it makes good sense to apply these same words to Peter Maxwell Davies himself. **G**

EXPERIENCE Sir Peter Maxwell Davies's music is being performed in Proms 35, 38 and 70, Proms Saturday Matinees 2 and 3, and in the Proms Plus Composer Portrait at 5.45pm at the Royal College of Music on August 14



RECOMMENDED RECORDINGS

Three recordings that show the range of Davies's output

**Taverner**

Soloists; BBC Symphony Orchestra / Oliver Knussen
NMC (M) (2) NMCD157 (3/10)

This 2009 release of a 1996 BBC recording presents a revelatory performance of Davies's first opera, a work that stands for all the essential aspects of the composer's creative development.

**Ave Maris Stella. Psalm 124. Dove, Star-Folded Gemini** / Ian Mitchell

Metier (F) MSV28503 (7/08)

A rare and outstanding example of a relatively recent recording of works for smaller forces, including

Ave Maris Stella, music whose visionary eloquence and intensity Davies has never surpassed.

**Piano Works 1949-2009**

Richard Casey *pf*
Prima Facie (M) (2) PFCD017018

This double album contains an interview between pianist and composer, and also the first recording of *Parade*, written when Maxwell Davies was just 15, alongside a range of compositions representing all phases of his mature work.

Vocal



Alexandra Coghlan on Handel duets from soprano and mezzo:
'Neither singer is afraid of ugliness; their directness brings an operatic palette and scope to these domestic works' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 76**



Richard Fairman reviews Mahler and Mahler from Karen Cargill:
'Cargill is expressive at every level while still proudly displaying the full glory of her voice' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 77**

JS Bach • Schelle

JS Bach Cantatas – No 44, Sie werden euch in den Bann tun; No 48, Ich elender Mensch, wer wird mich erlösen; No 73, Herr, wie du willst, so schicks mit mir; No 109, Ich glaube, lieber Herr, hilf meinem Unglauben

Schelle Komm, Jesu, komm

Dorothee Mields sop **Damien Guillon** counter-tenor

Thomas Hobbs ten **Peter Kooij** bass

Collegium Vocale Gent / Phillipe Herreweghe
PHI © LPH012 (69' • DDD • T/t)



These four cantatas all come from the first year of Bach's time in Leipzig, during which

he had just started working hard on the 'well-regulated church music' project that would produce five complete annual cycles of church cantatas in as many years. Not surprisingly, the 1723-24 cycle is a diverse one, but the centrality of chorale melody is a constant here: No 73's opening chorus uses its chorale's first four notes as a motto, then intersperses choral renditions of its individual lines with bursts of recitative; No 44 has it halfway through as a simple tenor solo over the continuo's agile tread; and No 109 closes with a rolling chorale prelude-style setting for choir and orchestra. Most touchingly, No 48 overlays its opening chorus, wearily pondering the question 'who shall deliver me from this body of death?', with a wordless answer: trumpet and oboe intoning a chorale melody associated with the text 'Ah, Lord, forgive me yet'. It is a subtle touch that most of us will have needed Christoph Wolff's booklet-note to point out. But its quiet reassurance for those with the faith – religious, musical or both – to listen is a perfect example of why one should never write off a release like this as just another disc of Bach cantatas.

Not that Philippe Herreweghe is a conductor to hammer these things out. His is a wisdom that looks to let the music speak by its sheer sonic and intellectual beauty, and his ear and mind enable him

to achieve that aim with unerring grace, humility and skill. With his superb 12-strong choir matched by an orchestra of deep but unfussy expertise, he produces a purring model of modern-day Bach performance. His four like-minded soloists, familiar from his other recent Bach recordings, gather for the final track, a strophic 'aria' affectingly alternating duple and triple metres by Bach's Leipzig predecessor-but-one, Johann Schelle.

Lindsay Kemp

JS Bach

Mass in B minor, BWV232

Reglind Böhler sop **Susanne Krumbiegel** mez

Susanne Langner contr **Martin Lattke** ten **Markus**

Flaig bass **St Thomas's Choir, Leipzig; Freiburg**

Baroque Orchestra / Georg Christoph Biller

Accentus © DVD ACC20281; © ACC10281

(114' • NTSC • 16:9 • DTS-HD MA, DTS5.1 &

PCM stereo • 0 • s)

Recorded live at St Thomas's Church, Leipzig, June 23, 2013



There is a natural attraction in a live performance of Bach's choral masterpiece made in the church where

he worked and is now buried, performed by (the successors of) the choir that he directed. The work's high points (by which I mean the fugal numbers) come across with all the requisite grandeur, and it's they that find this performance at its best, musically speaking. In the opening section of the *Credo*, however, one senses the trebles flagging, unless it's those held notes that are overly taxing: once the 'Patrem' kicks in, things improve noticeably. The absence of pathos in the 'Crucifixus' is in its own way very poignant, drawing attention to the formula of the descending bass by failing to overload it until the hushed tones of the conclusion (which are here more a matter of orchestration than interpretation). More hushed still is the conclusion of the 'Confiteor': the transition from its fugue to the 'Et expecto' is nicely

done, though the very final passage momentarily loses focus.

The solo numbers are more of a mixed bag, for while fully committed and more than competent, the singers rarely command one's attention as they might, while their instrumental counterparts experience occasional slips in negotiating their walk-on roles. (A notable exception is the 'Et in Spiritum Sanctum' in the *Credo*, where the oboes d'amore truly shine.) That said, Georg Christoph Biller's direction is sympathetic and self-effacing, and the Freiburg Baroque Orchestra more than the sum of their parts.

The same might be said of the project as a whole, for while this may not be the most authoritative account of this much-loved work, the sense of occasion that a live recording imparts is palpable; so, for that matter, is the sense of focused music-making, tempered by a discreet but distinct camaraderie (among the boy trebles, certainly, but with the adults as well). Sound and visuals function well, the camerawork keeping things moving without undue distraction. It is always refreshing to watch period instruments being performed: the corno da caccia in the 'Quoniam tu solus' you really could watch (and hear) all day... **Fabrice Fitch**

JS Bach

St Matthew Passion, BWV244

Julian Prégardien ten Evangelist **Karl-Magnus**

Fredriksson bar Christus **Karina Gauvin** sop **Gerhild**

Romberger mez **Maximilian Schmitt** ten **Michael**

Nagy bar **Regensburg Cathedral Choir; Bavarian**

Radio Chorus; Concerto Köln / Peter Dijkstra

BR-Klassik © 3 900508 (163' • DDD • T)

Recorded live at the Herkulessaal, Munich, February 16 & 17, 2013

Also available on © DVD 900509



Here is a recording drawn from performances in the Herkulessaal in

Munich, where Karl Richter recorded his versions in 1958 and 1979. But instead of



Bach from above: Georg Christoph Biller conducts the St Matthew Passion in the gallery of the composer's erstwhile workplace, St Thomas's Church, Leipzig

the Munich Bach Orchestra we have the period instruments of Concerto Köln, while it's the Bavarian Radio Chorus who are the successors to the Munich Bach Choir. The former numbers over 40 singers: a smaller group, probably, but just as substantial in tone. If your preference is for one-to-a-part minimalism, read no further.

In fact devotees to Richter's earlier recording (I don't know the other one) will find themselves at home here. Peter Dijkstra takes things appreciably faster, of course, reaching the finishing post a good 35 minutes ahead of Richter. The opening chorus (7'14" to Richter's 9'46") is flowing with no loss of solemnity; elsewhere the performers have no problem with Dijkstra's speeds but the result can be perfunctory, as when 'the centurion, and they that were with him' cry 'Truly this was the Son of God'. The continuo group includes harpsichord as well as organ, sometimes playing simultaneously: a controversial area that I will sidestep, except to observe that the absence of the organ at the description of the earthquake vitiates the effectiveness of the passage.

The soloists are led by the superb Evangelist of Julian Prégardien, the son of Christoph. His pacing of the text is

exemplary and he is not afraid of a near-operatic expressiveness: when the cock crows, he rolls the 'r' in 'krähete', and he is fierce when Pilate delivers Jesus to be crucified. As Jesus, Karl-Magnus Fredriksson is no victim: he is firm, forthright, with a bass-like solidity. Karina Gauvin beautifully sustains the line in 'Aus Liebe' and tastefully decorates the reprises of her arias in Part 1. If Michael Nagy and Maximilian Schmitt, both excellent, can't efface memories of Fischer-Dieskau (Richter) and Wunderlich (Karl Münchinger on Decca), well, who can?

As for further textual matters, the soloists add appoggiaturas to the recitatives with such naturalness that it comes as a shock when Judas sings a blunt ending at the point where he shows remorse. Another surprise is the foreshortened cadence before 'Ja nicht auf das Fest'. This moving performance also comes on DVD, with 'highly atmospheric lighting effects'.

Richard Lawrence

Selected comparison:

Richter, r1958 (5/59th) (ARCH) 463 635-2AOR3

Brahms

Ein deutsches Requiem, Op 45

Christiane Libor sop **Thomas E Bauer** bar **Warsaw Philharmonic Choir and Orchestra / Antoni Wit**

Naxos © 8 573061 (75' • DDD • T/I)

Also available on NBD0039



A fine-sounding, sensitively paced *German Requiem* with good, fairly chaste

choral singing and an especially impressive baritone in Thomas E Bauer. Tempi are on the broad side, the opening 'Selig sind' rapt and cleanly balanced. Amazing the variety of interpretations that have extended our view of the piece in recent years, especially Sir John Eliot Gardiner's, his swiftly lunging first bars of 'Selig sind die Toten' so different to Antoni Wit's ochre-tinted reverential prayer. Gardiner also treads a nifty 'Denn alles Fleisch' with raw brass and battling timps setting the scene for a humbling, even terrifying first climax. Antoni Wit opts for a more magisterial, Klemperer-like approach, less warlike than Gardiner and with patiently warning horns pushing the pressure from 2'27". There's an imposing cry of 'Aber des Herrn Wort bleibet in Ewigkeit' from 9'30", too, and a trenchant, rhythmically forceful reading of the more obdurate-sounding music that follows. Bauer's singing of 'Herr, lehre

doch mich' compares with the best and Wit's handling of the sudden orchestral interpolation at 3'43" (premonitions of the First Symphony, already in the making) is very effective. The most tender of introductions ushers in Christiane Libor for 'Ihr habt nun Traurigkeit', her approach perhaps more operatic in style than is ideal for the music (and a little unwieldy here and there), but nicely sung. Elisabeth Schwarzkopf under Klemperer still takes the palm in this movement though I'd say Katharine Fuge for Gardiner, framed by some effective string *portamentos*, is hardly less effective. With good sound, refined further for Blu-ray, the Naxos team has provided us with an outstanding bargain; but don't pass up the opportunity of hearing Klemperer, Gardiner or (for a fine 'historic' mono option) Kempe, with Elisabeth Grümmer and Dietrich Fisher-Dieskau, a vintage classic too often passed over.

Rob Cowan

Selected comparisons:

Kempe (4/56⁸, 1/94) (EMI) 764705-2;

(NAXO) 8 111342

Klemperer (2/62⁸) (EMI) 678330-2 or 404338-2;

(ALTO) ALC1202

Gardiner (5/12) (SDG) SDG706

Cooper

Silver Threads

Melissa Hughes *sop* Jacob Cooper *elec*s

Nonesuch © 7559 79572-1 (50' • DDD)



Jacob Cooper has a simple and logical explanation for why his song-cycle *Silver*

Threads is set for electronics and voice, as opposed to the tried-and-true piano. Essentially the laptop is today's primary music-making tool, and the sounds it can create are those that the general public hears on the radio, on television and in the cinema. The cycle originated as a single song based on a haiku attributed to the noted Japanese poet Matsuo Bashō. To expand the work into a full six-song cycle, Cooper brought in five other poets (Greg Alan Brownderville, Tarfia Faizullah, Kristin Kelly, Dora Malech and Zach Savich) to provide new texts inspired by the haiku, although the stretched-out vocal lines usually render the words in an indistinct, disconnected fashion. The featured soprano is Melissa Hughes, one of today's most committed and skilful new-music interpreters.

The opening title-song consists of slow-moving sustained tones, gentle chordal

ostinatos and bass notes that commence in between beats and sometimes slide down to lower pitches. Long vocal tones slowly ease in and out of the mix. The second song, 'Fame', features thunderstorm sound effects murmuring in the background, listless organ-like accompaniment and more slow-motion melodies. The tempo picks up for 'Antique Windfall', where Hughes's voice is subject to electronic manipulation as it harmonises with itself. 'Wefted Histories' could have been lifted off a lounge/bossa nova DJ mix; here digital delay energises the ethereal vocal-writing. 'Unspun' is 12 minutes' worth of understated pulsing, unchanging harmony and vocal effects processing; 'Jar' is more of the same. If you like early Brian Eno and other 'ambient' composers who imitated him, you'll probably respond more positively than me to the skilfully produced, low-voltage, emotionally reserved and rather faceless aesthetic that Cooper presents in his Nonesuch label debut.

Jed Distler

Desenclos • Poulenc • Vilette

Desenclos Messe de Requiem^a. Nos autem.

Salve regina Poulenc Litanies à la Vierge noire^b

Vilette Attende Domine. Hymne à la Vierge.

O sacrum convivium

The Choir of King's College London /

David Trendell with ^aChristopher Woodward,

^bRichard Hall *org*

Delphian © DCD34136 (70' • DDD)



About two-thirds of this excellent disc is devoted to music by Alfred Desenclos,

about whom not much seems to be known. Born in 1912, he won the Prix de Rome in 1942 and later became director of the Conservatoire in Roubaix, where he had been a student. By the time of his death in 1971 he had written choral works, competition pieces for the Paris Conservatoire and a symphony.

This Requiem will appeal to anyone who likes the settings by Fauré and Duruflé. Like them, Desenclos omits the 'Dies irae'. He is fond of parallel triads, the bass-line following the melody step by step. This is doubtless a conscious archaism but it could equally well be a nod in the direction of Massenet or Puccini. Although the unison tune in the 'Libera me' is reminiscent of the corresponding movement in the Fauré, it would be unfair to write Desenclos off as a purveyor of second-hand goods. The piece is beautifully written, with well-

judged climaxes and appealingly unexpected harmonies. David Trendell gets a first-rate performance from his choir, full of light and shade, and the few solo passages give no cause for apprehension. Of the two motets, *Nos autem* is particularly fine, with its symmetry and, again, parallel octaves.

Pierre Vilette's *Hymne à la Vierge* dates from 1954. The strophic setting of three stanzas is followed by a gloriously soupy four-bar coda, ravishingly sung. Poulenc's *Litanies à la Vierge noire* makes an affecting conclusion. The recorded sound, from the chapel of Exeter College, Oxford, is quite wonderful.

Richard Lawrence

Handel

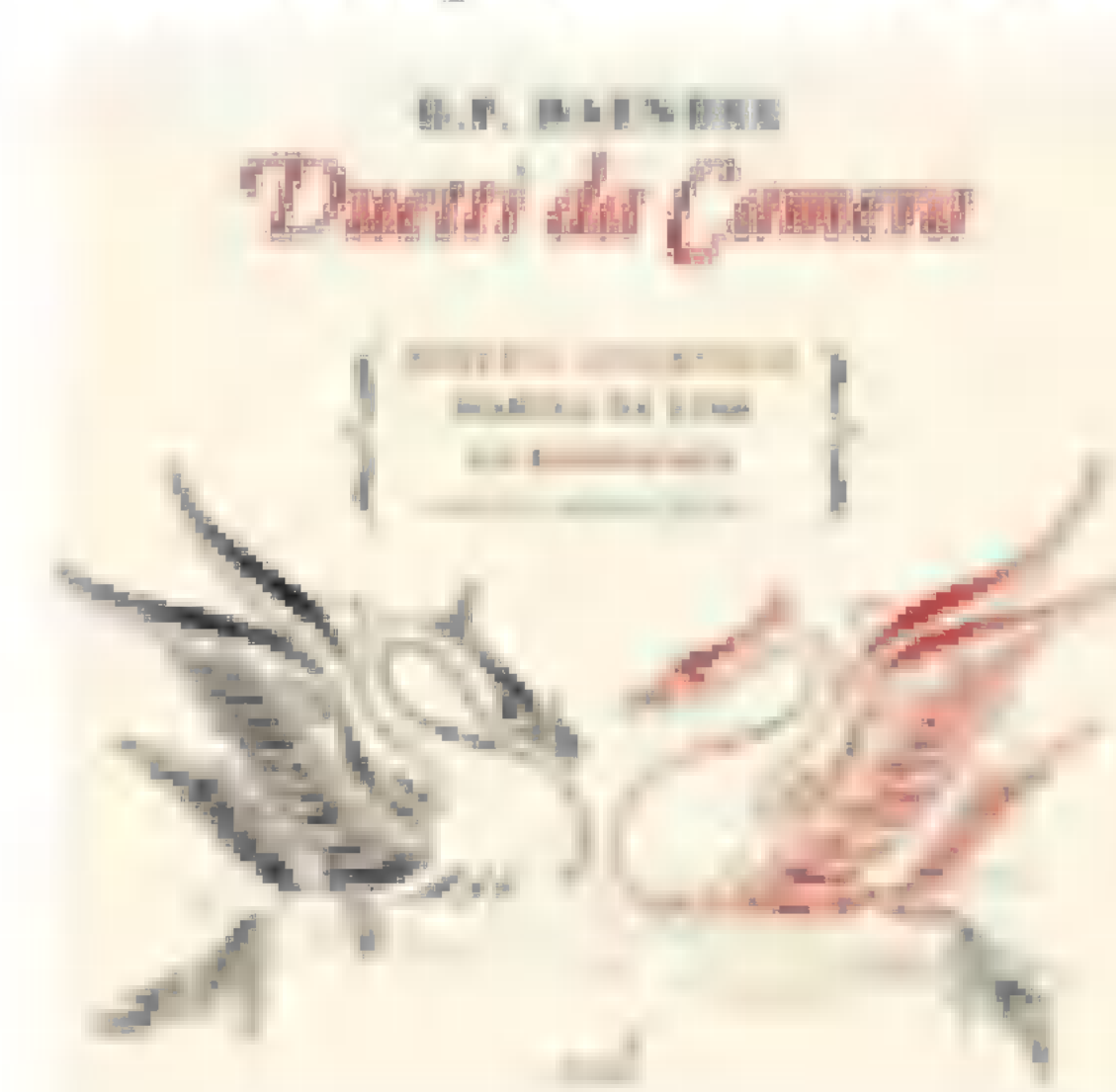
'Duetti da camera'

A miravi io son intento, HWV178. Beato in ver chi può, HWV181. Conservate, raddoppiate, HWV185. Fronda leggiera e mobile, HWV186. Langue, geme, sospira, HWV188. No, di voi non vuo' fidarmi, HWV190. Se tu non lasci amore, HWV193. Sono liete, fortunate, HWV194. Tanti strali al sen mi scocchi, HWV197. Troppo cruda, troppo fiera, HWV198

Roberta Invernizzi *sop* Marina De Liso *mez*

La Risonanza

Glossa © GCD921516 (65' • DDD)



Last year, the soprano Robert Invernizzi joined forces with the mighty mezzo Sonia

Prina for a disc of Baroque *duetti da camera*. Roaming from Monteverdi to Marcello, Handel to Scarlatti, 'Amore e morte dell'amore' (Naïve, 10/13) was an evocative journey through a developing genre. Now Invernizzi returns for a closer look at Handel's chamber duets, exploring repertoire often overshadowed – especially on disc – by the composer's operatic writing.

With not a bar of recitative in sight, these duets cut straight to the good stuff. Melodically it's all heady and expansive, but without the narrative frame of the operas or secular cantatas emotions can easily become monochrome, contrasting ecstasy and despair with predictable regularity. Freed from the deadlines and demands of the stage, however, Handel's invention feels fresh, and there's not a single dud in a selection that explores the full 40-year span of these compositions.

Invernizzi is joined here by mezzo Marina De Liso – a lighter partner than Prina but perhaps a better fit for repertoire that lacks the emotional abandon of

Monteverdi or Lotti. Common to both albums is Handel's athletic *Tanti strali*, which here exudes a joy and a youthfulness the slower, earlier version lacks. It is matched by *Troppa cruda* for the ferocious energy of its coloratura. Neither singer is afraid of ugliness; their directness brings an operatic palette and scope to these domestic works.

The stillness and underplayed intensity of *A miravi* and the stately dance *Beato in ver chi può* contrast effectively with the exuberance elsewhere; but while the singers excel in characterisation, compressing musical drama into these microcosms, it would be nice to hear just a little more personality and presence from Fabio Bonizzoni's rather anonymous harpsichord continuo.

Alexandra Coghlan

A Mahler • G Mahler

A Mahler Fünf Lieder **G Mahler** Rückert-Lieder. Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen

Karen Cargill *mez* Simon Lepper *pf*

Linn ⑤ CKD453 (53' • DDD/DSD • T/t)



Glasgow-based Linn Records continues to do well by its Scottish artists. As anybody

who has heard Karen Cargill in 19th-century opera (Waltraute in *Götterdämmerung* a speciality) knows, this is a bronze-tinted mezzo of Wagnerian amplitude. Occasionally, her new disc reveals a small loss of quality when she is singing quietly; but for the most part this Mahler-family recital, like her previous outing for Linn – a recording of Berlioz's *Les nuits d'été* with the Scottish Chamber Orchestra (6/13) – finds Cargill expressive at every level, while still proudly displaying the full glory of her voice.

It is good to see Alma Mahler's songs getting equal billing alongside those of her husband. The *Fünf Lieder*, published in 1910, include some of her most accomplished songs and Cargill's richly coloured singing is well attuned to their cusp-of-the-Romantic-era atmosphere. The second song, 'In meines Vaters Garten', matches a poem of fairy-tale simplicity to music saturated with post-*Tristan* rapture, and Cargill and her accompanist, Simon Lepper, do not hold back on its luxurious radiance. The *Rückert-Lieder* start out a touch heavy-handedly ('Blicke mir' too rushed), but soon settle upon the requisite sensitivity. The closing stanza of 'Ich bin der Welt', floated on the softest pp, is especially lovely. The *Lieder*

eines fahrenden Gesellen encompass a wide range of emotion and Cargill tears into the fury of 'Ich hab' ein glühend Messer' (a recording with orchestra surely beckons).

Among recommendations for the two Gustav Mahler cycles, Christian Gerhaher's all-Mahler disc has a rare eloquence. For the Alma Mahler songs, Cargill is as inspiring as anybody.

Richard Fairman

G Mahler songs – selected comparison:

Gerhaher, Huber (RCA) 88697 56773-2

Purcell • Morley

'A Purcell Collection'

Morley Second Dirge Anthem

Purcell Dido and Aeneas - To the hills and the vales. Dioclesian - Behold, O mightiest of gods. King Arthur - Fairest isle; How happy the lover; What power art thou?. The Tempest - Full fathom five. Birthday Ode, 'Come ye sons of art away', Z323 - Bid the virtues; Strike the viol. Now does the glorious day appear, Z332 - By beauteous softness. St Cecilia's Day Ode, 'Hail! bright Cecilia', Z328. My heart is inditing, Z30. O God, thou art my God, Z35. Praise the Lord, O Jerusalem, Z46. Thou knowest, Lord, Z58

Voces8; Les Inventions

Signum ⑤ SIGCD375 (70' • DDD • T)



Voces8 here make use of their intermediate size – neither a choir nor strictly a one-to-a-part ensemble – to bring together what would normally be an unlikely Purcell vocal anthology of church anthems inter-strewn with choruses and solo numbers from the stage works and court odes. Their vocal blend and solid ensemble have been praised before, and rightly too; here they score well in more intimate unaccompanied choral pieces (*O God, thou art my God* or *Thou knowest, Lord, the secrets of our hearts*) and in theatre choruses from *Dido and Aeneas*, *Dioclesian* and *The Tempest*. But while in bigger, orchestrally accompanied pieces such as *Praise the Lord*, *O Jerusalem* and *My heart is inditing* there are gains in agility and contrapuntal clarity (always a plus in Purcell), there are losses in grandeur and weight compared to performances by larger groups; *My heart is inditing*, an eight-part piece, also suffers from palely defined textural contrasts.

The group's individual voices are equal to their tasks in the solo numbers, if not always as characterful as might be expected from singers more used to standing out front. Emily Dickens's 'Bid the graces' from *Come, ye sons of art* is poised and lofty (if slightly lisped), while countertenor

Barnaby Smith's two numbers include a rollingly assertive version of the too-often dirge-like 'Strike the viol', joyfully ornamented in its orchestral refrain by the stylish strings and recorders of the French ensemble Les Inventions.

There are times when I feel that interpretative tricks are missed – the deceptively plain but ardent word-setting of *O God, thou art my God* is carelessly run through, while the heart-stopping simplicity of 'Fairest isle' does not gain anything by being heavily ornamented almost from the start – but there is no doubting that this disc still offers a rich and enjoyable demonstration of Purcell's genius.

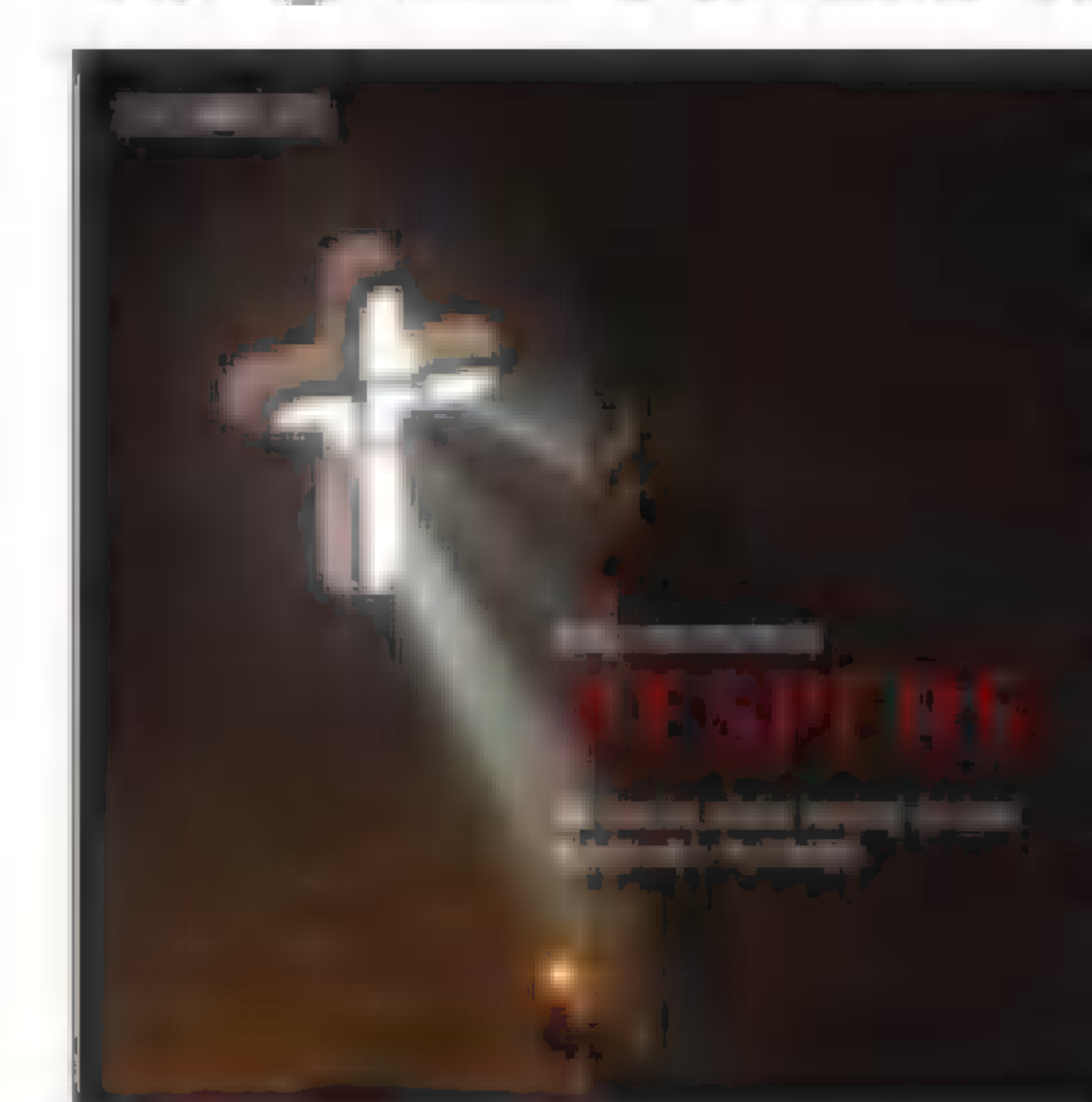
Lindsay Kemp

Rachmaninov

Vespers (All-Night Vigil), Op 37. The Theotokos

Netherlands Radio Choir / Kaspars Putniņš

BIS ⑤ BIS2039 (60' • DDD/DSD)



It seems these days as though every self-respecting chamber choir is keen to record

Rachmaninov's monumental *a cappella* masterpiece as its calling card. The bar has been set at a very high level with demonstration-quality recordings by several fine groups including Tenebrae and, most recently, the Latvian Radio Choir under Sigvards Klava on Ondine (*Gramophone* Recording of the Month in February 2013).

With 68 singers, the Netherlands Radio Choir is a much larger body than most chamber choirs. Under the direction of the Latvian Kaspars Putniņš it is clearly a highly flexible instrument. Although the idiom of the music is relatively straightforward, being largely homophonic with frequent subdivisions of the four main vocal lines, Rachmaninov places great demands on even the most skilled singers. Balance, dynamic contrasts and above all perfect pitching have to be maintained throughout, challenges which the Dutch singers pass with audible ease.

Another test is the quality of the bass section, which is famously called upon to descend down to low Ds, Cs and, on three occasions, low B flat. Fortunately, on this recording (made in the radio studio in Hilversum in autumn 2012) they are placed well to the front of the mix, providing idiomatically Slavic cello/bassoon tone. The brief solos are full of supplication, rich and varied in tone. The bonus is the early sacred concerto

Ever-Vigilant in Prayer of 1893, which stretches the first sopranos a little.

Although this is an enjoyable and perceptive account, especially noteworthy for the basses' contribution, it is a close runner-up to the Latvian Radio Choir's disc in terms of lofty expressiveness and sheer atmosphere. **Malcolm Riley**

Selected comparisons:

Tenebrae, Short (9/05) (SIGN) SIGCD054

Latvian Rad Ch, Kļava (2/13) (ONDI) ODE1206-5

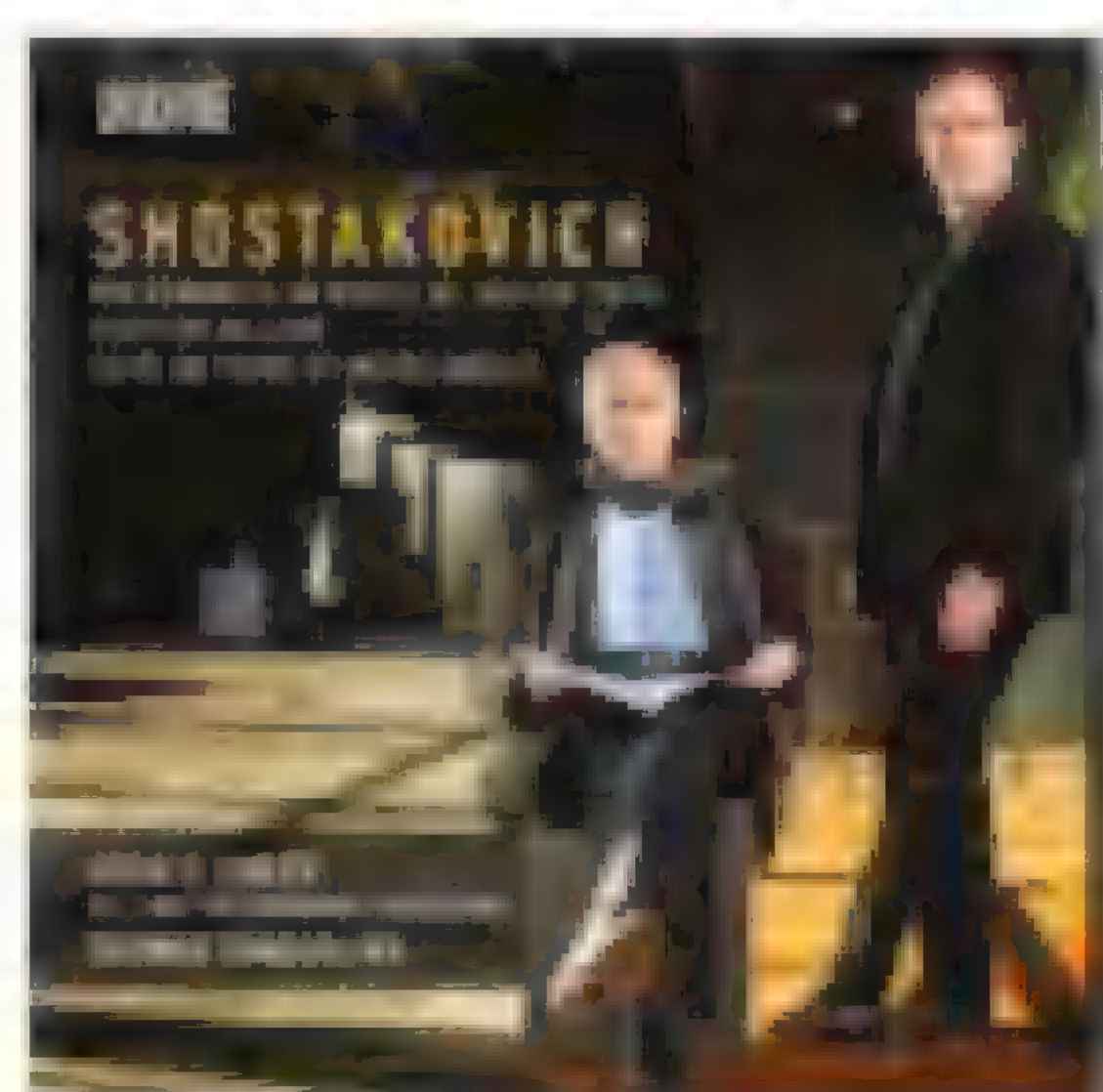
Shostakovich

Shostakovich Six Romances on Verses by British Poets, Op 62/140. Suite on Verses of Michelangelo Buonarroti, Op 145a

Traditional Annie Laurie (arr Shostakovich)

Gerald Finley bass-bar Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra / Thomas Sanderling

Online © ODE1235-2 (62' • DDD)



Shostakovich's songs continue to lag behind the rest of his output in terms of their

representation on recordings and in concert, and the language barrier is clearly a prime reason. Getting over that barrier is fraught with complications, however, starting with the fact that Shostakovich himself was always more interested in the ethical content of his texts than in their poetic quality. No linguist or literary scholar himself, he was also far from a purist when it came to performances in non-Russian-speaking countries.

So there is much to be said for Gerald Finley's reinstating of the original English-language texts of *Six Romances* on verses by Raleigh, Burns and Shakespeare, and his going back to the original Italian for the Michelangelo sonnets. That entails a few – though remarkably few – necessary adjustments to the composer's rhythms. For the Suite the idea is not new. Fischer-Dieskau recorded the sonnets that way in 1987 (in the piano version with Aribert Reimann); hence Ondine's description, 'world premiere recording of the Italian version', is not strictly speaking accurate. I'm not sure anyone can claim precedence for the Op 62 cycle but here again Ondine's claim to world premiere status for the 'orchestral version' is shaky, given that Safiulin and Rozhdestvensky were there in 1986 (the two-CD reissue has admittedly eluded my searches but a reliable owner-friend has confirmed that it contains the Op 62a full orchestral version rather than the more commonly heard rescoring for chamber orchestra, Op 140).

With the performances themselves, things are much more straightforward.

Finley and Sanderling are compelling advocates, and their subtlety makes for a refreshing change from the more stentorian delivery of certain old Soviet counterparts. For the Russian texts and vocal timbres, Sulejmanov on *Capriccio* and Leiferkus on DG are reliable back-ups. But this new disc has to be applauded for its initiative, as also for its top-notch sound quality; and given that the Safiulin and Fischer-Dieskau alternatives are practically unobtainable, anyone interested in acquiring it should not hesitate.

David Fanning

English Songs – comparative versions:

Sulejmanow, Cologne RSO, M Jurovski

[chbr orch] (CAPR) CAP10 778

Safiulin, USSR Ministry of Culture SO, Rozhdestvensky

[full orch] (MELO/BMG) 74321 59057-2

Michelangelo Ste – comparative versions:

Fischer-Dieskau, Reimann [in Italian]

(1/89, 12/95) (TEL) 4509 97460-2

Leiferkus, Gothenburg SO, N Järvi [in Russian]

(DG) 447 084-2GH

R Strauss

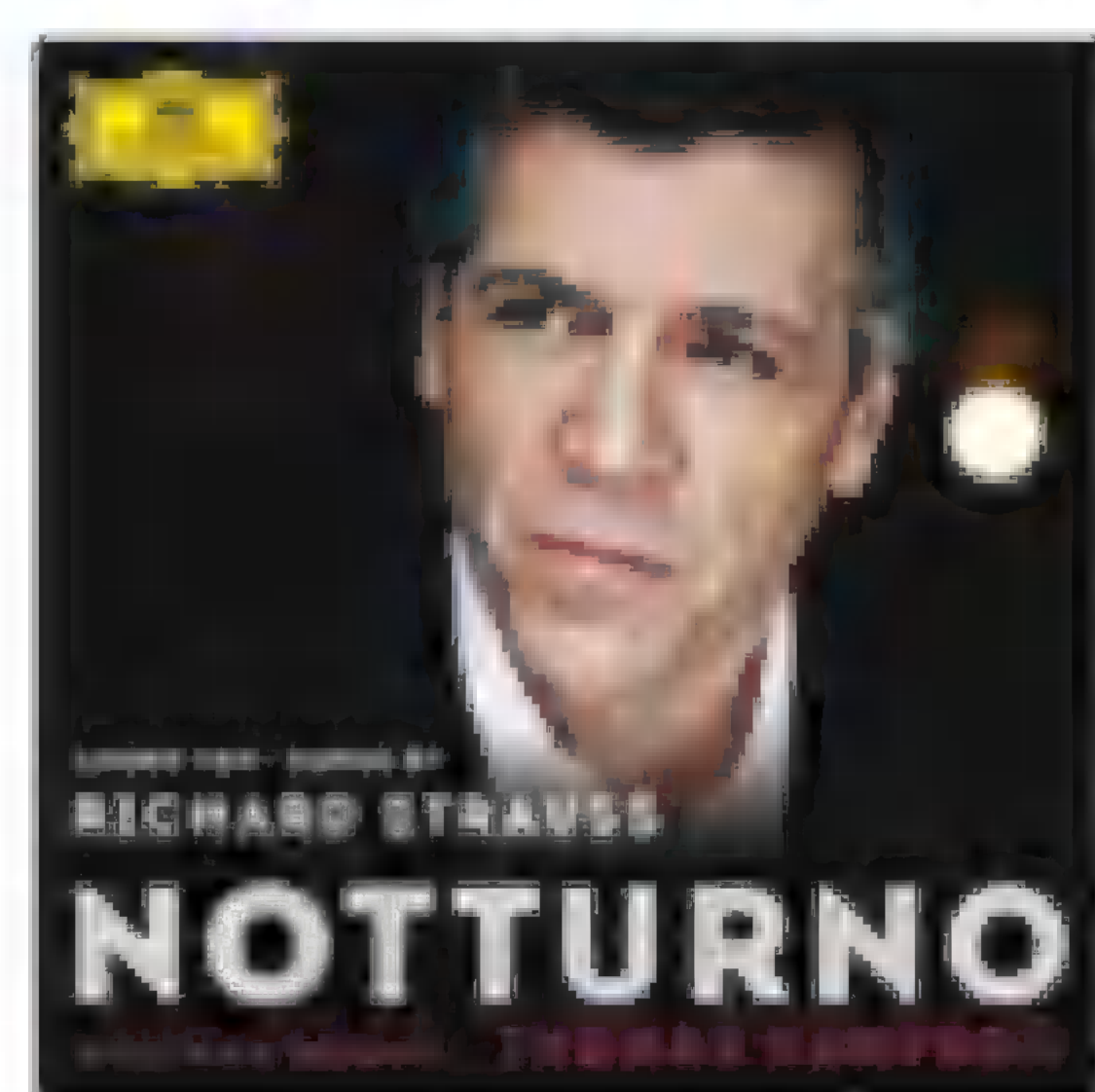
'Notturmo'

Acht Lieder aus letzte Blätter, Op 10 – No 1, Zueignung; No 3, Die Nacht. Winternacht, Op 15 No 2. Mein Herz ist stumm, Op 19 No 6. Ach weh mir unglücklichem Mann, Op 21 No 4. Vier Lieder, Op 27 – No 1, Ruhe, meine Seele!; No 3, Heimliche Aufforderung; No 4, Morgen. Traum durch die Dämmerung, Op 29 No 1. Sehnsucht, Op 32 No 2. Das Rosenband, Op 36 No 1. Befreit, Op 39 No 4. Notturmo, Op 44 No 1. Freundliche Vision, Op 48 No 1. Die heiligen drei Könige aus Morgenland, Op 56 No 6. Vier Lieder, Op 87 – No 1, Vom künftigen Alter; No 3, Und dann nicht mehr; No 4, Im Sonnenschein

Thomas Hampson bar

^aDaniel Hope vn Wolfram Rieger pf

DG © 479 2943GH (70' • DDD)



In his introduction to the booklet Thomas Hampson says that he wanted to mark

Strauss's 150th anniversary by offering a selection of songs that followed the path of the composer's 'inspired craftsmanship'. The programme that he has chosen runs from 'Zueignung', the first song in Op 10, to three of the infrequently heard Op 87 set and makes a well-planned selection that plays to Hampson's strengths. It is especially heartening that he has found space for 'Notturmo', the expansive Richard Dehmelt setting originally for low voice and orchestra, which is a relative rarity on disc, though Hampson has performed it in concert. Powerfully sung,

with Daniel Hope's solo violin and Wolfram Rieger at the piano creating a ghostly atmosphere, it comes across as a major achievement of Strauss's song-writing career – a dark and chilling masterpiece, akin to Schubert's 'Der Doppelgänger' in its visionary intensity.

It marks a high point of Hampson's recital, in part because he is not always in such good voice elsewhere. Although the two recording sessions were only a month apart, some other songs – a 'Morgen' short on sweet stillness, 'Freundliche Vision' a touch threadbare in tone – reveal passing signs of vocal wear and tear. All the songs, though, benefit from Hampson's impeccably clear German and his ability, with Rieger's support, to set ideally well-judged speeds. Comparison with Fischer-Dieskau's six-CD Strauss collection shows that it is Hampson who generally shapes the songs most persuasively, even if Fischer-Dieskau scores for intimacy. Hampson's singing is generally on a more operatic scale, giving songs like 'Heimliche Aufforderung' and 'Von künftigen Alter' an impressive weight of utterance. Among all-Strauss recitals, Jonas Kaufmann (Harmonia Mundi) and Margaret Price (Warner Classics) are currently the top recommendations. Hampson's new disc makes an important addition to the list.

Richard Fairman

Stravinsky

Oedipus rex. Apollon musagète

Stuart Skelton ten.....Oedipus

Jennifer Johnston mez.....Jocasta

Gidon Saks bass-bar.....Creon

David Shipley bass.....Tiresias

Benedict Quirke ten.....Shepherd

Alexander Ashworth bar.....Messenger

Fanny Ardant.....Narrator

Monteverdi Choir; London Symphony Orchestra /

Sir John Eliot Gardiner

LSO Live (M) LSO0751 (79' • DDD/DSD)

Recorded live at the Barbican, London,

April 25 and May 1, 2013



Anyone familiar with the old Philips recording (6/55) of Stravinsky conducting

his *Oedipus rex*, and Jean Cocteau summoning the audience with clipped command, 'Spectateurs!', will be surprised to hear the call coming from a female voice. But it works well: Fanny Ardant is not only a film star but has experience of the French classical theatre, home of good declamation. She is, throughout, classical but also personal. The risk lies in loss of

the formal convention of emotional distance intrinsic to the work, but the manner suits Mme Ardant and it matches Sir John Eliot Gardiner's approach. Without distorting the form, he allows his singers more expressive freedom than is usual. Stuart Skelton, even if perhaps more emotional than Stravinsky might have liked, brings increasing tension into his interpretation, especially from the moment of his admission of murder, 'Ego senem kekidi'; and Jennifer Johnston takes Jocasta's elaborate coloratura full tilt, bringing her aria off with great aplomb, but also responds gently to her unexpected marking *tranquillo* at 'Ne probentur'. David Shipley keeps a more detached and firm line for the warnings of Tiresias, and Gidon Saks makes a tough Creon. (Why do performances still keep to the crowd's notorious Latin howler 'Vale', or 'farewell', as he enters? They mean 'Ave'.) There is good characterisation of the all-revealing Shepherd and Messenger from Benedict Quirke and Alexander Ashworth. For the most part the soloists are well recorded, though there is occasionally some change of direction and volume; the Narrator seems to have her own microphone. But credit is not done either in tone or in balance to the excellent Monteverdi Choir. They sing the farewell to Oedipus movingly.

Apollon musagète, which might have been thought the epitome of Stravinsky's classicism, is in fact almost the reverse. He never wrote a more romantic melody than for the duet between Apollo and Terpsichore, tenderly played by Gardiner, who also makes much of the dance rhythms that naturally suffuse the score, coming close to treating the odd pauses in the Terpsichore variation as a ballroom hesitation waltz. There is plenty of verve in the second tableau, with Apollo's variation (a good violin solo and duet) and the succeeding Pas d'action. This is a beautiful performance.

John Warrack

Warlock

'A short while for dreaming - Choral Works' As dew in Aprylle. The Bayley Berith the Bell Away. Benedicamus Domino. Bethlehem Down. A Cornish Carol. A Cornish Christmas Carol. Corpus Christi. The Full Heart. Ha'nacker Mill (arr Tomlinson). I saw a fair maiden. The Lady's Birthday. Lullaby. My Own Country (arr Tomlinson). The Night (arr Tomlinson). One More River. The Rich Cavalcade. The Spring of the Year. Three Dirges of Webster - Call for the Robin-Redbreast and the Wren; The Shrouding of the Duchess of Malfi. Yarmouth Fair (arr Gibbs)

Blossom Street / Hilary Campbell

Resonus ® RES10129 (57' • DDD • T/t)



A master miniaturist, Peter Warlock is at his best in the songs – both solo and choral – that make up the largest part of his output. So much depends on the tiniest of melodic variations, harmonic glances or the shifting balance of voices, and it's a brave choir that undertakes to paint with such meticulous sonic brushstrokes. Now on their third recording (and their first digital-only release), the young professionals of Hilary Campbell's Blossom Street chamber choir have a growing reputation. Unfortunately there's little here to match the excellence of last year's 'Down by the Sea' (Naxos, A/13).

The problems start with St James's Church, Sussex Gardens – a venue far too booming resonant for this delicate material. The rhetorical brilliance of *Benedicamus Domino* or *Yarmouth Fair* gets lost in echoes, and Campbell seems unwilling to adjust the scope of her gestures and tempi to match the space. The opener, *As dew in Aprylle*, feels rushed rather than impetuous, while Webster's dense text for *The Shrouding of the Duchess of Malfi* is lost almost entirely in the acoustic. Enunciation is a particular issue for a recording whose booklet omits the texts for all copyright material, leaving listeners guessing for a good six tracks.

Seven world premiere recordings provide the central interest here – mostly recent arrangements of Warlock's solo songs for choral forces. The charming *My Own Country* works beautifully in four-part, Stanford-esque homophony, while *The Night* is mossy-soft with cluster-chords – a rival for the harmonic drama of Warlock's early experiment *The Full Heart*.

Only in the final track, *Bethlehem Down* – a choral shibboleth if ever there was one – do Blossom Street find the blended intensity and control that this music demands. They can do it, so why they choose not to for so much of this disc is a mystery. **Alexandra Coghlan**

'Amorosi pensieri'

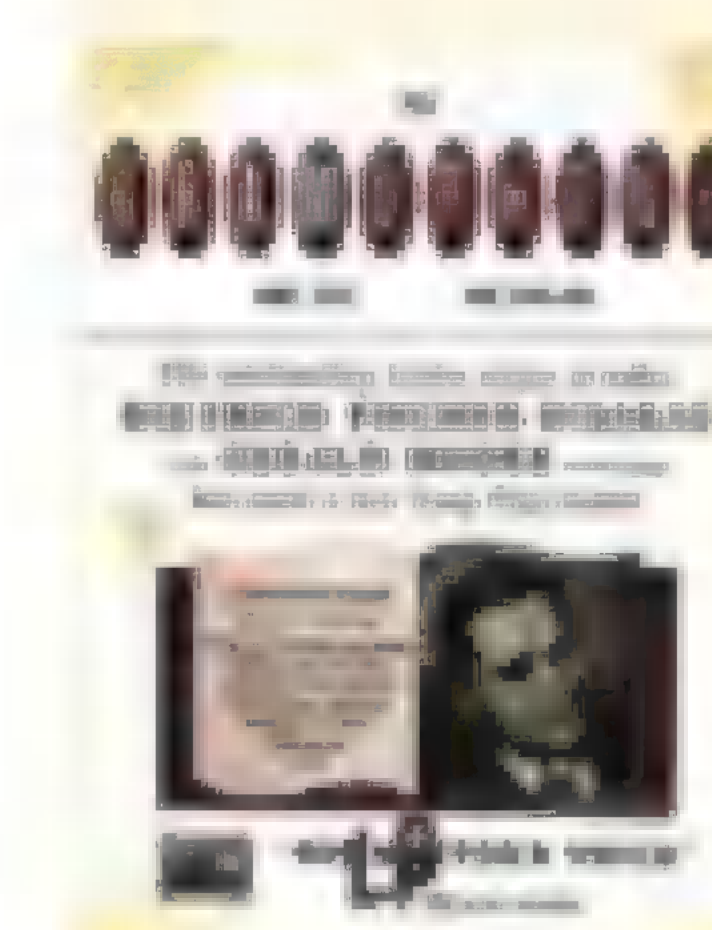
'Songs for the Habsburg Court'

Guyot En lieux d'esbatz m'assault melancolie. Je suis amoureux d'une fille. Vous estes si douce et benigne. L'arbre d'amour ung fruit d'amaritude. Vous perdez temps de me dire mal d'elle. Tel en mesdict qui pour soy la desire Monte Amorosi pensieri. Ombra son io. Con che soavità. Anima dolorosa. O dolci sguardi. Que

GRAMOPHONE Archive

Stravinsky's Oedipus rex

Three Oedipus recordings that came before Gardiner's – and how Gramophone rated them



JUNE 1955

Stravinsky Oedipus rex

Jean Cocteau narr

Cologne RSO / Igor Stravinsky

Philips ● ABL3054 (12in • 36s 5½d)

Cocteau's narration and the

composer's own conducting are very much a part of the occasion. Peter Pears as the king and Martha Mödl as Jocasta are moreover what one may rarely find together again in this work: two artists who almost instinctively understand the idea and are good enough musicians to carry it out. The real excitement starts on the second side, and though Frau Mödl labours for breath at first, she makes a thrilling thing of the fast reiterating of the word 'oracula' until (exactly as was intended) it sounds like a curse. *Philip Hope-Wallace*



MARCH 1956

Stravinsky Oedipus rex

Paul Pasquier narr

Suisse Romande Orchestra /

Ernest Ansermet

Decca ● LXT5098 (12in • 39s 7½d)

There is no easy, direct decision to be made whether to choose the composer's own reading or that of the man whose 'reputation as the 'perfect interpreter of my works is well established', and who first suggested that the composer himself should pick up a baton to direct his own works. Very tentatively, I would suggest that the Ansermet disc is, all things considered, the more satisfactory version. For, taking reading, execution and recording into account, it emerges as the more evenly sustained achievement. *Andrew Porter*



AWARDS 2010

Stravinsky Oedipus rex

Gérard Depardieu narr

Mariinsky Orchestra /

Valery Gergiev

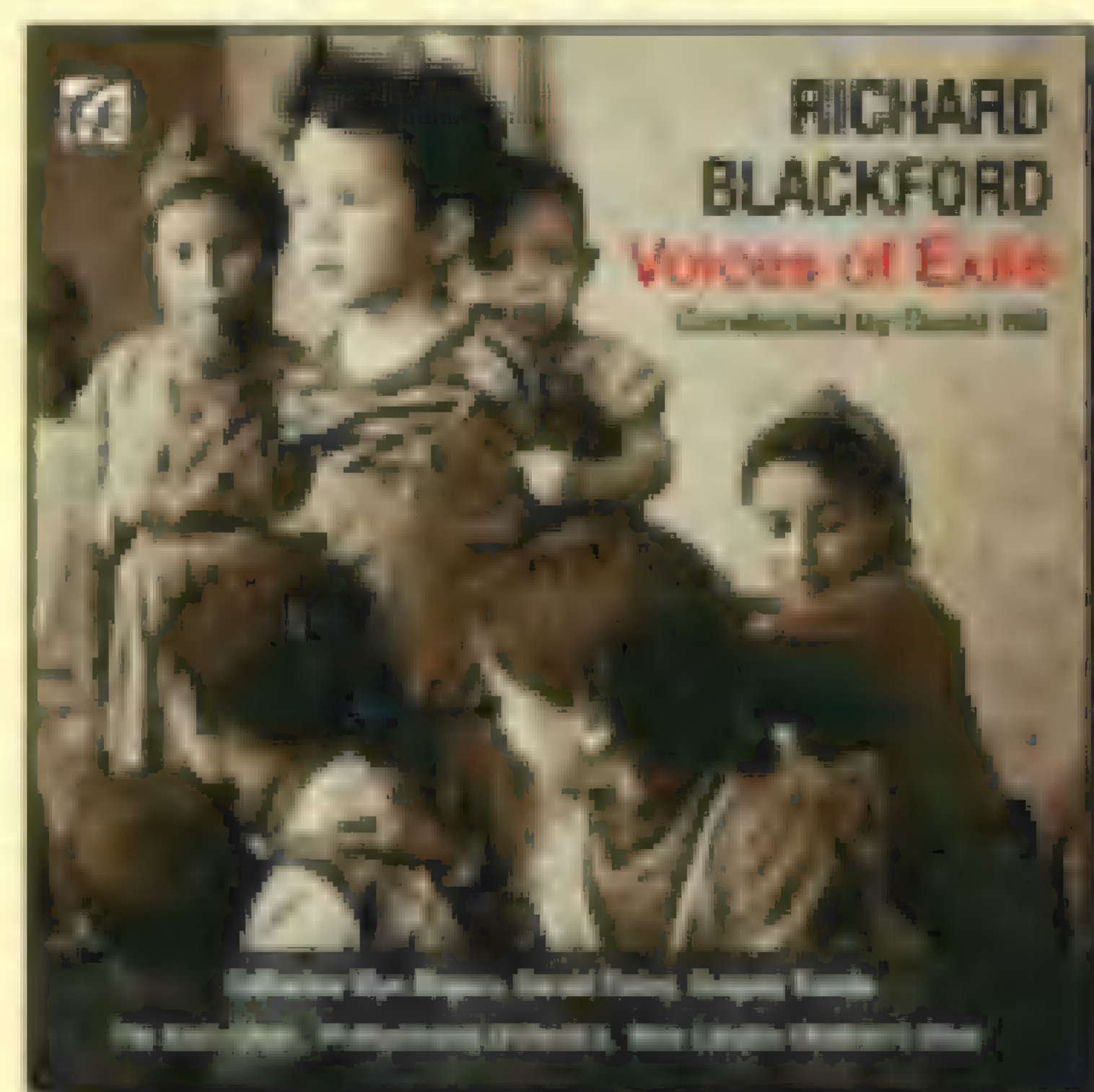
Mariinsky ® MAR0510

(74' • DDD • T/t)

The Russians are singing Latin but their timbre brings something special to this monumental Greek drama with its seductive Italianate melodies outlining horrific events. Of the soloists, Ekaterina Semenchuk (Jocasta) sounds plummy at first but she and Sergei Semishkur (Oedipus) bring electrifying intensity to the duet where they realise their guilt. Overall this is a performance of at times shattering impact. *Peter Dickinson*

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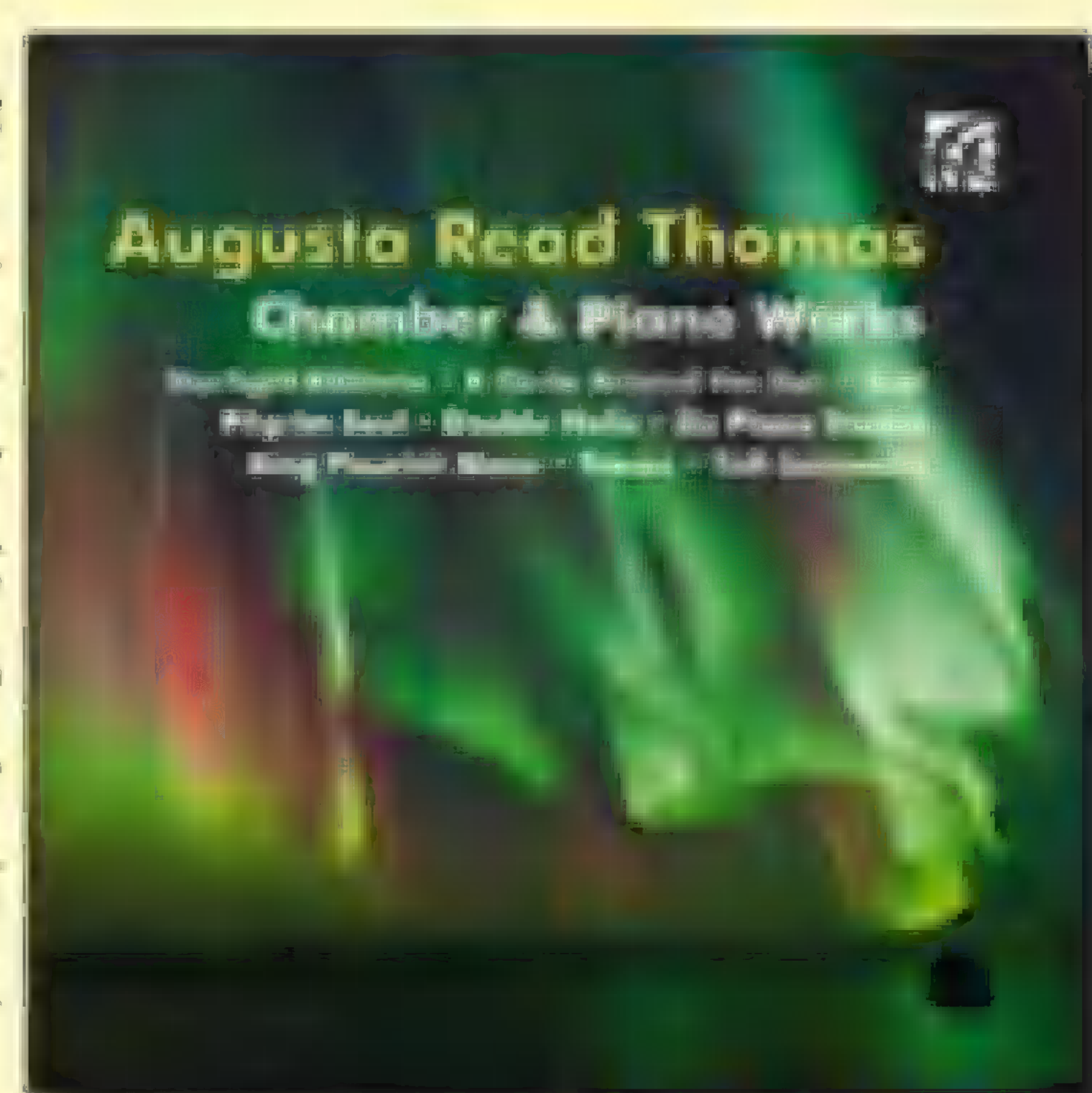
Richard Blackford Voices of Exile
Conducted by David Hill
NI 6264

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www.theclassicalreviewer.co.uk

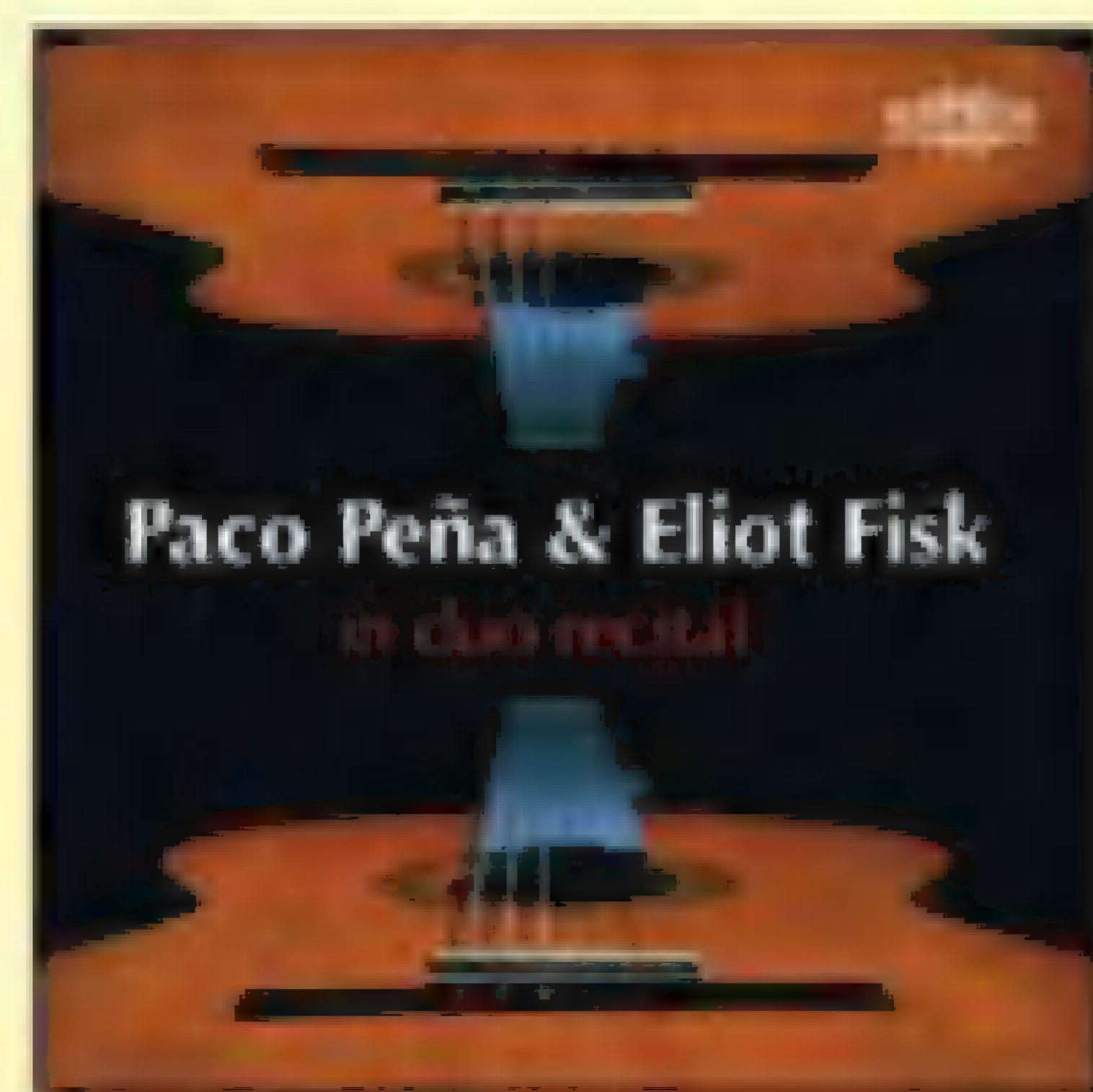
"Despite the steady number of works that have appeared on various labels, Augusta Read Thomas has not had the coverage her large and diverse output warrants, so this first of two discs from Nimbus could not be more welcome... One can only await Vol.2 of this series with impatience."

Richard Whitehouse, Gramophone, April 2014 Editors Choice on
NI 6258



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Khachaturian Violin Sonatas
Hideko Udagawa, violin
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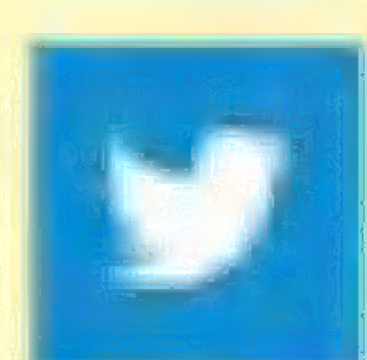
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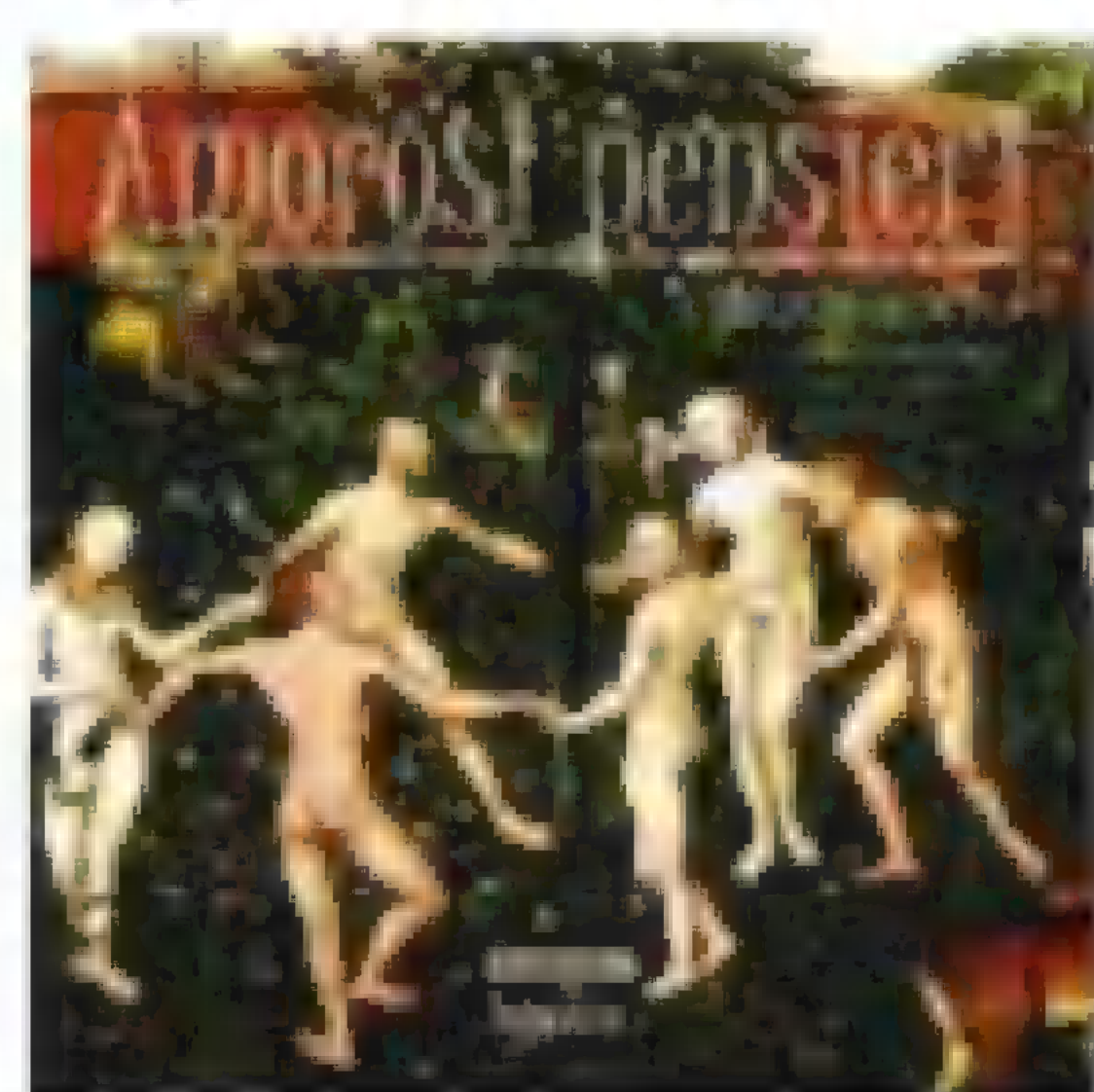


Hilary Campbell conducts Blossom Street at St James's Church Sussex Gardens in a Warlock programme including seven world premieres (review on page 79)

me servent mes vers. Susanne un jour. Sortez regretz **Regnart** Ach weh der Zeit, die ich verzert. Ein Lieb nit mehr hat. Venus du und dein Kind. Du hast mich sollen nemen. Chi mi consolerà. Amor, che debbo fare. Vola vola pensier. Alarm', alarm' o fidi miei pensieri **Vaet** Amour leal. Sans vous ne puis. En l'ombre d'ung buissonet

Cinquecento

Hyperion © CDA68053 (61' • DDD • T/I)



This is great. Hitherto Cinquecento – that marvellous male-voice sextet in Vienna who

have sung a 16th-century Mass almost every Sunday morning in the Rochuskirche for almost 10 years, alongside gorgeous chant-singing – have mainly recorded sacred music. But they are no less persuasive in the song repertory. It's not just that their ensemble and tuning are flawless, nor that with six highly individual voices they can create an amazing range of colours, but that with their multicultural forces they can fit effortlessly into the style of the music, whether the texts are in Italian, French or German.

As in most of their previous records, they have chosen Viennese repertory – or

rather, in this case, music by composers from the Low Countries who had major positions at the Imperial Chapel in Vienna. Monte and Regnart were unbelievably prolific: if we are miles from having either of them in complete modern editions, that is absolutely not because the music is in any sense feeble, as you can hear on this record. I am not aware that any of the 25 short pieces here has been recorded before: Monte (by far the most prolific madrigalist of all time) has here eight masterful pieces; Jean Guyot (so far as I can see, never previously recorded) has six charmingly gooey pieces in the manner of Gombert on speed; for the sovereign (and also prolific) Vaet we hear the only non-Latin pieces he composed, all three of them; and the record ends with a mouth-watering selection of songs in German and Italian by the more light-hearted Regnart. Don't miss it.

David Fallows

'Colores'

Bascuñana Morriña Ferrer Lua de vrau

Grignon Triptic C Halffter Panxoliña

Mompou Combat del somni - Damunt de tu només les flors; Aquesta nit un mateix vent; Jo et pressentia com la mar; Fes me la vida transparent **Sorozabal** Siete Lieder - Six Basque Songs **Traditional** Aldapeko sagarraren

(arr Donostia). Atzo ttun ttun (arr Donostia). Canta ó galo ven (arr J Nin). El cant dels ocells (arr Morante). Eu coa miña monteira (arr J Nin). Iruten are nuzu (arr Donostia). Lili eder bat (arr Donostia). Loa, loa (arr Guridi). Meu amor meu amoríño (arr J Nin). Nik baditut (arr Donostia). El noi de la mare (arr Morante). El rossinyol (arr Morante)

Itziar M Galdos sop **Per Arne Frantzen** pf

LAWO Classics © LWC1048 (66' • DDD • T/I)



This is an original and inventive anthology of songs by Spanish composers, but

avoiding the Castilian language, presenting instead works composed to texts in Galician, Basque and Catalan. Some of the composers' names will certainly be reasonably familiar to hispanophiles – Joaquín Nin, Pablo Sorozabal and Jesús Guridi, for example – but others, such as Ricard Lamote de Grignon or José Moreno Bascuñana, are far more obscure.

The songs are grouped into sets of art songs and arrangements of folksongs from each linguistic region, but these can overlap with grouping by composer, as is the case with Sorozabal's *Siete Lieder*, representing

the Basque art song, or the four sublime settings from Mompou's *Combat del somni*, representing the Catalan. The folk arrangements are frequently very striking: Nin's set of three Galician songs, for example, is far more original harmonically than the three art songs (by Bascuñana, Rafael Ferrer and Cristóbal Halffter respectively) that precede them, which leads one to suspect that the necessity to preserve their modal melodic integrity dictated unusual harmonic solutions. On the other hand, this is not the case with Padre Donostia's Basque folksongs, which positively revel in lush sentimentality, and it is here that Itziar Galdos is at her best; in general I find her vibrato somewhat unsubtle and an obstacle to the genuine colour in her voice.

The odd man out here is the cycle by Lamote de Grignon, in that the texts are poems by Tagore translated into Catalan. Musically they are affectingly Debussian, while García Morante's versions of three of the best-known Catalan folksongs, including 'El cant dels ocells', aim for transparency. A disc for the specialist, this.

Ivan Moody

'A French Baroque Diva'

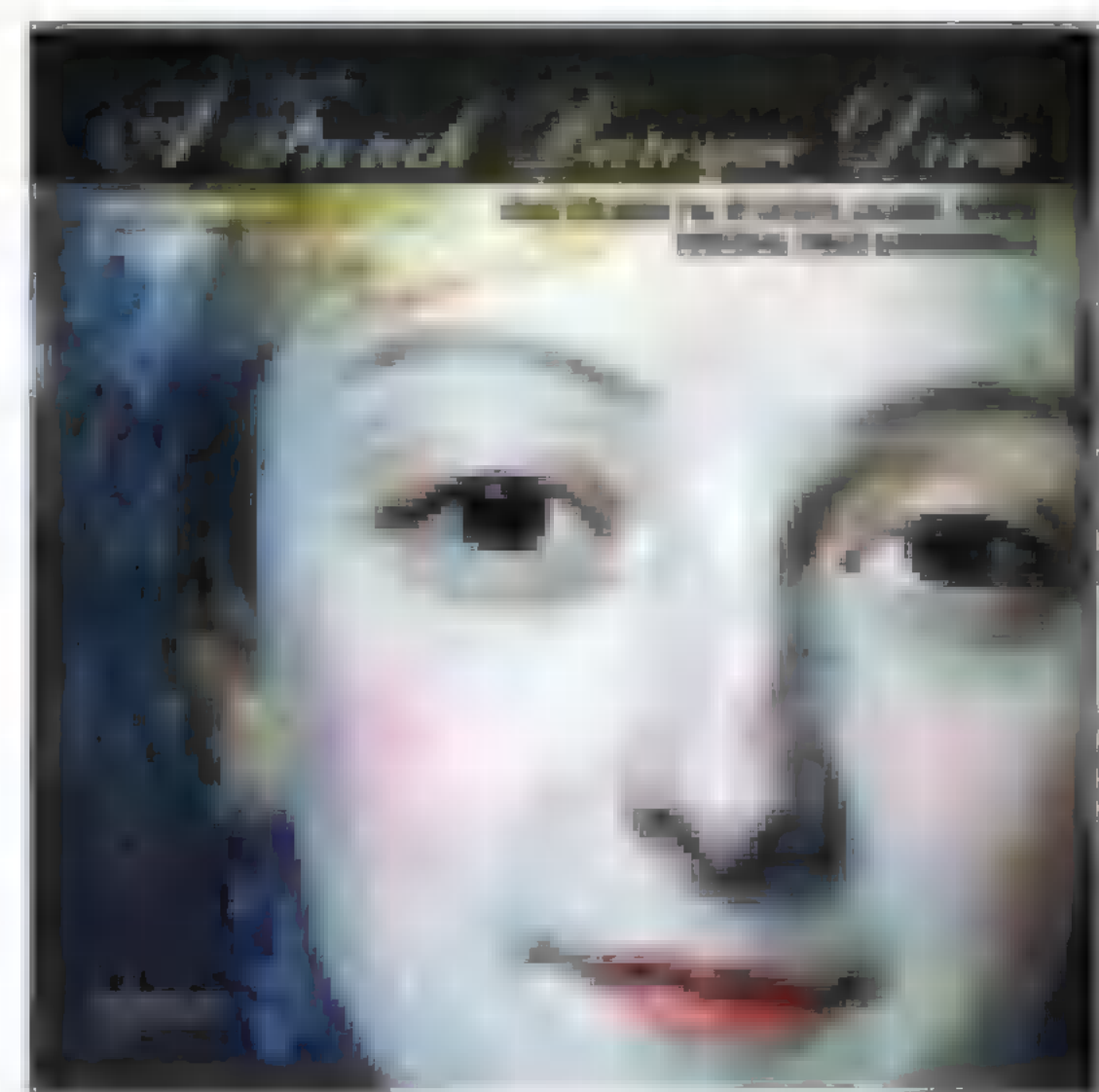
'Arias for Marie Fel'

Fiocco Laudate pueri - Laudate pueri; A solis ortu; Alleluia **Lacoste** Philomèle - Ah! quand reviendront nos beaux jours? **Lalande** Exsurgat Deus, S71 - Regna terrae. Te Deum laudamus, S32 - Sinfonie; Tu rex gloriae; Tu ad liberandum suscepturus hominem. Cantate Domino, S72 - Viderunt omnes termini terrae **Mondonville** Daphnis et Alcimadure - Gasouillats auzelêts. Venite, exsultemus - Hodie si vocem; Venite adoremus **Rameau** Castor et Pollux - Un tendre intérêt vous appelle...Tristes apprêts. Platée - Amour, lance tes traits. Les surprises de l'Amour - La lyre enchantée **Rousseau** Salve regina

Carolyn Sampson sop

Ex Cathedra / Jeffrey Skidmore

Hyperion © CDA68035 (73' • DDD • T/t)



This is a brilliantly planned and executed, musically illustrated biography of Marie

Fel, one of the great 18th-century divas and muse of Rameau, admired by the Philosophes and adored by Paris audiences. So don't be put off by the apparently recherché repertoire: this is a programme that pleases as much today as it did in hers, guided by Graham Sadler's beautifully crafted booklet-notes.

Fel made her Opéra debut in a 1734 revival of Louis Lacoste's *Philomèle*,

singing the role of Venus. Carolyn Sampson, in superb form, is joined here by the choir of Ex Cathedra, who sing with precision and clarity of articulation in a lovely bright acoustic. As well as at the opera house, Fel also performed at the public concerts held in the Tuileries, where she was a soloist in Latin choral and orchestral music by Lalande, Mondonville, Rousseau and the Italian Fiocco, as well as in private performances of the theatre works by Mondonville and Rameau at Fontainebleau and Versailles included (mainly excerpts) on this disc.

The orchestra of Ex Cathedra, led by Margaret Faultless, provide stirring and sympathetic accompaniments for this varied succession of virtuoso vocal vehicles. Flautist Rachel Brown performs the exquisite solo and *concertante* lines in Mondonville's *Venite, adoremus* and illuminates the sound of the lyre with her piccolo in Rameau's divertissement from *Les surprises de l'Amour*. There is also sensitive *concertante* playing by the bassoonists in 'Tristes apprêts' and, with the addition of the oboist Gail Hennessy, in the movement from Lalande's *Cantate Domino*.

Best of all, the longer we listen to Sampson's voice, the more she seems to inhabit the aura of Fel, clearly a skilled and charismatic yet deeply affecting performer. Fel's artistic flexibility is further demonstrated by the inclusion of the Fiocco (here performed with ornamentation Fel wrote into her part), Mondonville's frothy pastorale – obliging Sampson to sing in Fel's native Occitan – and Rousseau's bang-up-to-date *Salve regina*, which obliges the soloist to blend her voice with the horns. Sampson's performance is the more admirable for evoking the spirit of another singer.

Start to finish, Jeffrey Skidmore devotedly shapes and paces the programme to achieve a fittingly vivid portrait of Mlle Fel.

Julie Anne Sadie

'Le jardin de Monsieur Rameau'

'A wander through the heart of French vocal art from the Enlightenment'

With music from operas by **Campra**, **Dauvergne**, **Gluck**, **Grandval**, **Montéclair** and **Rameau**

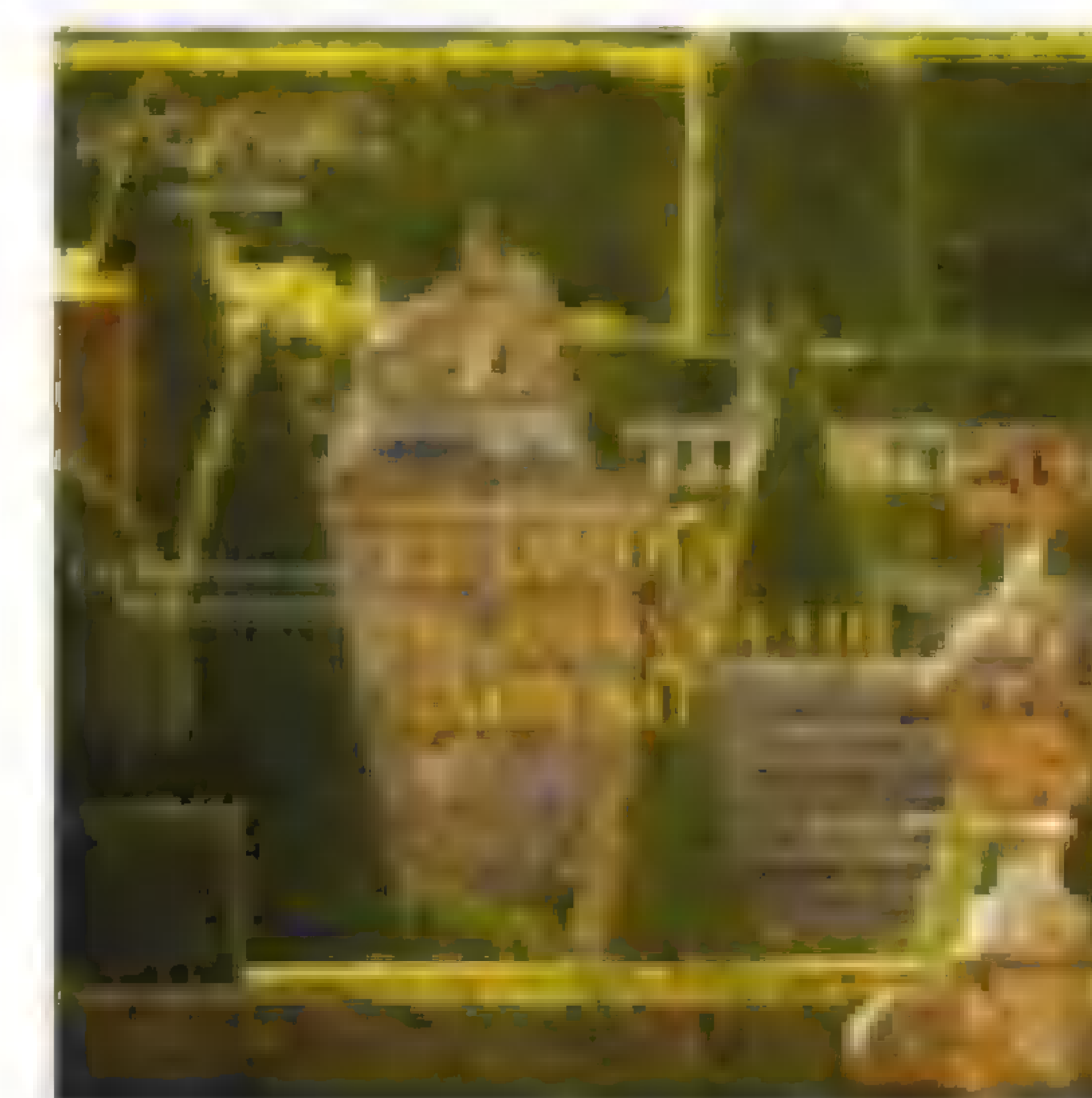
Daniela Skorka sop Emille Renard mez

Benedetta Mazzucato contr Zachary Wilder ten

Victor Sicard bar Cyril Costanzo bass

Les Arts Florissants / William Christie

Les Arts Florissants Editions © AF002 (81' • DDD • T/t)



This follows the pattern of Sabine Devieille's recital

'Le grand théâtre de l'amour' (Erato, 2/14) by fashioning a sequence of airs and ensembles from various operas into a story. But whereas Devieille's anthology drew exclusively on operas by Rameau, this new programme – devised by Paul Agnew, tenor and now Associate Musical Director of Les Arts Florissants – comprises excerpts from works by various composers ranging from Campra (1697) to Dauvergne (1768).

The title reflects 'Le jardin des voix', the biennial training programme for young singers that William Christie founded in 2003 (the group recorded here made up the class of 2013). The links between the numbers are less tenuous than on the Devieille recording: Iole's air from *Hercule mourant* (1761) leads pleasingly into Aricie's from Rameau's first opera (1733), both of them softened by flutes; drunken Zerbin in *La Vénitienne* (1768) is followed by scenes from *L'ivrogne corrigé* (1760). But what are perhaps more interesting than the storyline are the links between the composers, with Rameau as the hub: according to Christie, he heard Montéclair's *Jephté* shortly before composing *Hippolyte et Aricie*; Dauvergne was one of his pupils. Gluck composed his *opéras comiques* for Vienna rather than Paris but he studied the operas of Rameau before writing his later *tragédies lyriques*.

William Christie and his orchestra are as wonderful as ever; his predilection for extra effects, including a noisy tambourine in *L'ivrogne corrigé*, extends to a wind machine in *Les fêtes d'Hébé*. The singers have been very well coached and make a good ensemble. Zachary Wilder, effortful in 'Hâtons-nous' from *Dardanus*, serves as a reminder of how accomplished tenors such as Paul Agnew really are in haute-contre roles. Cyril Costanzo has a good, firm bass but it sounds as though the beautiful sleep scene in *La Vénitienne* is too high for him. Victor Sicard, a graduate of the National Opera Studio in London, delivers 'Monstre affreux' to the manner born. The three women are uniformly excellent. Benedetta Mazzucato, more of a mezzo than a true contralto, is stylish and touching in Doris's plaint from *L'Europe galante*. The packaging includes texts and translations, good articles, a discography and a specially commissioned short story. Monsieur Rameau's garden is a delight.

Richard Lawrence

GRAMOPHONE *Collector*

NEW ENGLISH CHORAL MUSIC

Adrian Edwards listens to new works large and small that build on Britain's choral tradition and long-standing sense of musical spirituality



Making themselves heard: Tenebrae sing music by Paul Mealor on Decca's portrait 'I Saw Eternity'

Voices of Exile', reissued by Nimbus Alliance, is the main work in this survey of choral and vocal music by English composers. **Richard Blackford** has a penchant for highlighting events from recent history: the musical *King*, based on the life of Martin Luther King, was seen briefly at the Piccadilly Theatre in 1990; the cantata *Not in Our Time* marked the 10th anniversary of 9/11. *Voices of Exile* addresses the plight of the displaced and dispossessed across several continents, whose voices on tape are sometimes woven into the chorus, at other times with accompanying percussion in compelling underscoring. The body of the cantata is cast in the English choral tradition for large chorus and soloists with settings of the poets who have suffered in these countries. A challenging concept but one that Blackford realises with considerable expertise, juggling his disparate elements into a coherent whole. The choral writing owes some debt to Blackford's 20th-century predecessors but his orchestral sonorities are fresh, assured and finely calculated. A live performance might set at rest the feeling that the actuality, the novelty of the piece, stymies the flow of the music, a point driven home by 'Freedom', the final part of the cantata, which dispenses with the tape inserts, allowing the music to flow uninterrupted towards a conclusion of hope. This section includes the beautiful duet 'My Wish', a love poem from Kurdistan,

for mezzo-soprano and baritone, which receives a rapturous performance from the committed soloists Catherine Wyn-Rogers and Gerald Finley. Earlier, a gripping conversation between a prisoner confronting the ghost of his torturer in the Nigerian poem 'On the Death of Ken Saro-Wiwa' is compellingly told, though the vocal score indicates three missing bars of orchestral music at fig 638. The Bach Choir of 2005, under David Hill, are inspired with a clear top-line, the recording giving them a greater presence than the more recent *A Mass of Life* for Naxos.

Ronald Corp's 'Lullaby for a Lost Soul' speaks through the countertenor of Magid El-Bushra, whose haunting delivery of Francis Bourne's poems about death and mourning linger in the mind. The addition of flute, vibraphone and harp emphasises the androgynous nature of the poems, 'neither male nor female persons', as the composer puts it. Corp's musical settings are pithy. In 'Scarecrow Songs', the vibraphone fleshes out the 'sightless eye of the scarecrow' with chilling effect. These songs, 'set in lachrymal languages', were perhaps the link to the Dowland lute songs, suggested by poet to composer, which act as interludes between his poems. It's an effective ploy to counterbalance the intensity of expression of the voice.

The music of **Paul Mealor** and Patrick Hawes represents the middle-ground of what is now called 'faith music', though

both composers underline their undoubted sincerity in their Christian faith. Mealor's 'I Saw Eternity' is comprised of characteristics such as pedal notes and extended wordless soprano melisma. The straightforward setting of 'Make me a channel of your peace' is endearing; *A Prayer* (words by Henry VI) is deeply felt, the original tune complemented by an antique cymbal. Mealor is fond of percussion, which features in the title-track alongside an interwoven saxophone tune and bookends *Crucifixus*, six meditations on the prophecy and Passion of Christ. It brings to mind, not entirely irreverently, the opening scene of the film of *Carousel*, where Billy Bigelow confronts his past at the doorway to heaven, the indigo sky decorated with jangling stars. In the one animated piece, 'The tree takes living flame' from *Crucifixus*, the admirable voices of Tenebrae try hard to make themselves heard against the rock-style backing.

The concept of angels in their myriad forms is the inspiration behind **Patrick Hawes's** *Angel*, one of whom is said to have been sighted by British troops leading them to safety after a disastrous encounter in the early weeks of the First World War. This piece, 'Out of the depths', with words by the composer's brother, is bathed in a memorial glow by New College Choir and soprano Grace Davidson. Such treatment is not untypical of the composer's response, whether to liturgical or home-grown words. The bland nature of the music applies to the instrumentals too, as with the musical-box sound of 'Cherubim' for solo piano. Sincerity in this instance is not enough. For a better representation of the current English choral tradition, Decca should take a look at the *Diamond Jubilee Anthem Book*, the inspiration of Robert Ponsonby and Sir Peter Maxwell Davis, where they'll discover the beating heart of the English choral tradition. **G**

THE RECORDINGS



Blackford *Voices of Exile*
Bach Ch; Philh Orch / Hill
Nimbus © **G** NI6264



Corp *Lullaby for a Lost Soul*
El-Bushra, Carter, Turner, Desbruslais
Stone Records © 5060192 780413



Mealor *I Saw Eternity*
Tenebrae; Aurora Orch / Short
Decca © 481 0494

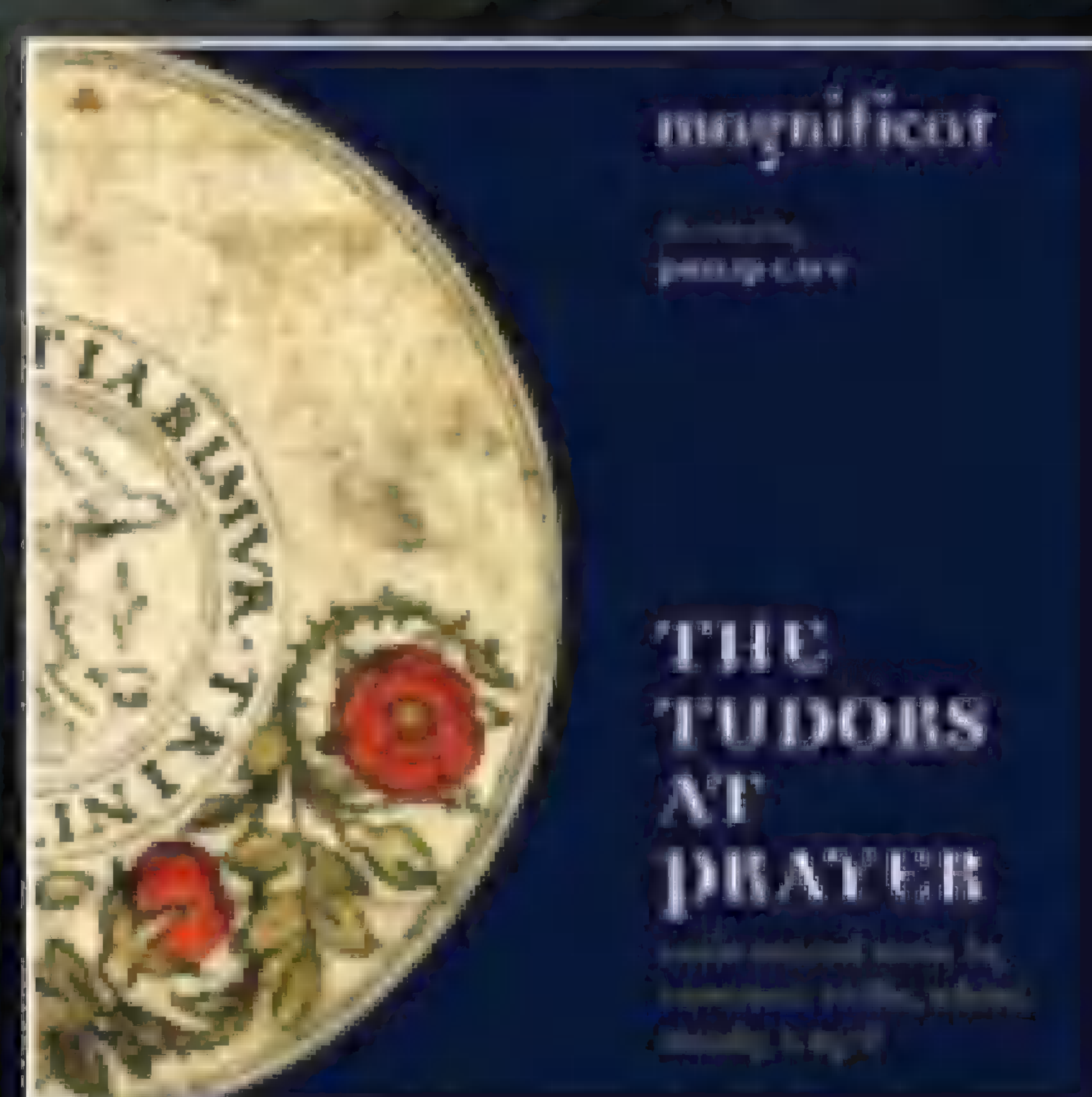


Hawes *Angel*
New Coll Ch, Oxford / Higginbottom
Classic FM/Decca © 374 2046

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FROM LINN

MAGNIFICAT The Tudors at Prayer



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Gramophone Editor's Choice Recordings

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Brahms	Clarinet Quintet & Trio (SACD)	Martin Fröst	£10.25
Brahms	Violin Sonatas 1 - 3	Kavakos, Wang	£11.25
Britten	+ Weinberg Violin Concertos (SACD)	Roth, Kutson	£14.00
Mozart	Piano Concertos 18 & 22 (SACD)	Brautigam	£10.25
Ravel	Ma mère l'oye + Musorgsky Pictures	van Immerseel	£10.50
Rossini	Otello (DVD)	Osborn, Bartoli, Tang	£13.00
Strauss R	Don Juan, Also sprach Zarathustra	CBSO, Nelsons	£11.00
Walton #	Violin Concerto, Symphony 1 (SACD)	Little, Gardner	£10.25
	French Baroque Diva	Carolyn Sampson, Skidmore	£10.25
	Amorosi pensieri	Cinquecento	£10.25
	Solo & Concerto Recordings (4cd)	Arthur de Greef	£21.50

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Bartók	Orchestral Works (2cd)	RSNO, N. Järvi	£10.25
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Mozart	Piano Concertos 22 & 24	Angela Hewitt, Lintu	£10.25
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Prokofiev	Violin Sonatas, 5 Melodies	Ibragimova, Osborne	£10.25
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‘Mortale, che pensi?’

‘Reliquie di Roma, Vol 3’

Anonymous A piè del sanguinoso tronco

Carissimi Deh, memoria. Jephte – Plorate,

filli Israel **Leone** Sonata XXIX terzo tono

Marazzoli Lamento d’Armida

Mazzocchi Dialogi e sonetti – Lagrime amare;

Nisus et Euryalus **Rossi** Lamento di Zaida.

Mortale, che pensi? **Stradella** Il Damone –

Sinfonia. L’incendio di Roma

Atalante / Erin Headley

Nimbus Alliance © NI6266 (66’ • DDD)



Lirone player Erin Headley (co-founder of Tragicomedia) now has her own

group, Atalante, who here present the third volume of an exceptional series investigating neglected music from early-17th-century Rome. Rossi’s three-voice madrigal *Mortale, che pensi?* is a melancholic contemplation of the fleeting nature of mortality, sung gorgeously by sopranos Katherine Watson and Nadine Balbesi and tenor Samuel Boden; it leads without hesitation into Watson’s enrapturing performance of Carissimi’s solemn ‘Deh, memoria’. For good measure, Headley also throws in the famous final chorus of Carissimi’s oratorio *Jephte*, but played by a consort of viols. Christian Immler sings with virtuoso precision and a vivid sense of narrative in Stradella’s solo bass cantata *L’incendio di Roma*, which describes the drunken Nero laughing as Rome burns and observes the tyrant’s doom.

Watson sings with piercing sweetness in Mazzocchi’s laments for the grieving mother of the murdered Euryalus (*Nisus et Euryalus*) and Mary Magdalene (*Lagrime amare*), both taken from the collection *Dialogi e sonetti* (Rome, 1638), whereas mezzo-soprano Theodora Baka takes centre stage in an impassioned performance of Marazzoli’s *Lamento d’Armida* and Boden’s honeyed tenor gently describes the group of Mary at the foot of the cross in *A piè del sanguinoso tronco* (the music is anonymous but the poetry is by Cardinal Antonio Barberini). Atalante announce that the fourth ‘Reliquie di Roma’ volume will present two oratorios by Mazzocchi, and thus this laudable enterprise will continue to offer manna from heaven to composers who remain unfairly lost in the wilderness.

David Vickers

‘The Tudors at Prayer’

Byrd Tribue, Domine **Mundy** Adhaesit pavimento.

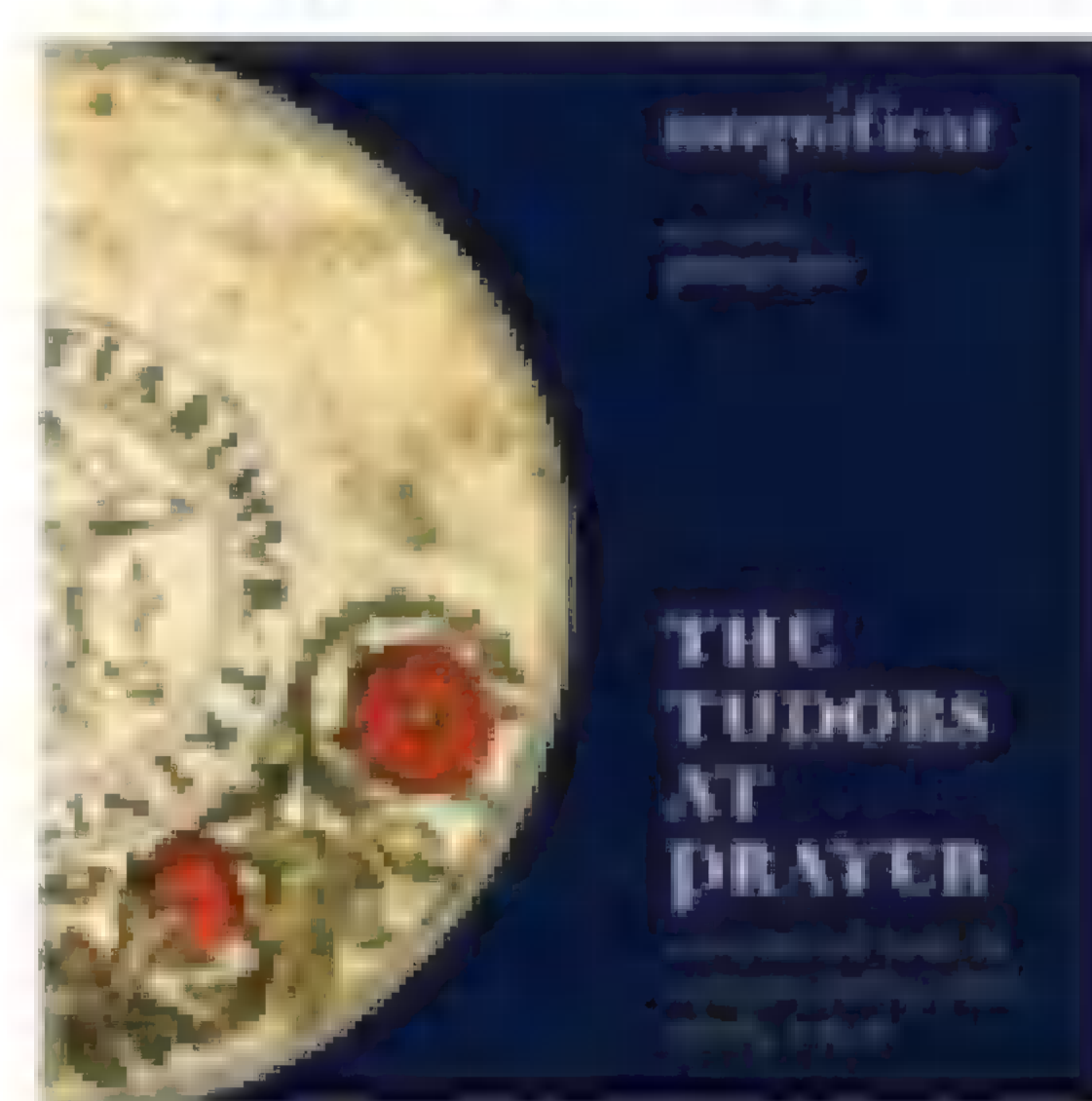
Adolescentulus sum ego. Vox Patris caelestis

Tallis Suscipe, quaeso Domine **Taverner**

Quemadmodum desiderat cervus **White** Domine, quis habitabit (III). Tota pulchra es

Magnificat / Philip Cave

Linn © CKD447 (79’ • DDD/DSD • T/t)



William Mundy’s *Vox Patris caelestis* is probably his most famous piece

(I reviewed The Sixteen’s most recent account in April), but this recital includes two shorter works, both substantial nonetheless. Magnificat’s performance of *Vox Patris* sets the tone for what follows – surprisingly, because its luxuriant nature contrasts with much of the rest, which tends towards the penitential. Disconcertingly, however, there’s little contrast in mood from one piece to the next: alongside the lively accounts of *Vox Patris* by The Sixteen and the Choir of Westminster Abbey, Magnificat sound almost world-weary, and the initial tempo soon flags, so that the piece ends up lasting a whopping 22 minutes as against 18 in the other readings. Perhaps an alternative, more reflective approach to the work was desired (in keeping with the recital’s prayerful theme, perhaps?), but then there is plenty of scope for that in the other selections.

Truth to tell, the question of tempo obtrudes throughout the recital: even Taverner’s pithy *Quemadmodum* tends to drag. Only with Tallis’s *Suscipe, quaeso* is there a palpable change of tack, because the frequent changes of texture, from homophony to imitation and back, ensure variety and prevent the ensemble from losing its grip on the pulse. This gives a sense of what might have been; but in repertory as well provided for as this, and with singers as experienced as these, one might have expected more revealing insights.

Fabrice Fitch

Mundy *Vox Patris* – selected comparisons:

Ch of Westminster Abbey, O’Donnell

(12/08) (HYPE) CDA67704

Sixteen, Christophers (4/14) (CORO) COR16119

The Art of Melancholy

Dowland All ye, whom Love or Fortune hath

betray’d. Behold a wonder here. Burst forth my

tears. Can she excuse my wrongs?. Come again,

sweet love doth now invite. Come away, come,

sweet love. Come heavy sleep. Flow my teares.

Fortune my foe. Frog Galliard. Go Crystal tears.

In darkness let me dwell. I saw my Lady weepe.

Lachrimae, or Seaven Teares. Mrs Winter’s

Jump. Now, O now, I needs must part. Say love if

ever thou didst find. Semper Dowland semper

dolens. Shall I strive with wordes to move?.

Sorrow, stay. Time stands still

Iestyn Davies *countertenor* Thomas Dunford *lute*

Hyperion © CDA68007 (77’ • DDD • T)



Of all the things that could have emerged from last year’s Dowland

anniversary, perhaps for many the most devoutly to be wished would have been a song recital disc from the English countertenor of the moment. Well, here it is, with 16 songs gathered under the title ‘The Art of Melancholy’ – although, this being Dowland, that encompasses most of the old favourites, and as Roger Savage’s excellent booklet-note makes clear, such is the subtle variety of music and words in Dowland’s melancholy world that ‘semper dolens’ does not have to mean ‘semper in idem’.

The main strength of Iestyn Davies’s singing lies in its straightforward lyrical beauty, certainly a sound fit for Dowland’s classic melodic grace. When his songs are performed as purely musically as this, the battle is already half-won, and indeed Davies seems to see no need for over-deliberate interpretation. His diction is clear (impressively quick in ‘Can she excuse?’) but his phrases are touched by naturalness and a rejection of the kind of interpretational point-making that, for instance, has led many others to introduce a tiny hiatus after the third note of ‘Time stands still’. Instead, Davies can reach the heart of the matter through leisurely lingering in ‘Flow my tears’, an aching swell on the penultimate note of the ever-superb ‘In darkness let me dwell’, a brief burst of ornamentation or a momentary flowering of vibrato when a phrase, note or vowel demands it. Melancholy, it seems, does not have to have downright angst waiting round the corner.

Davies’s accompanist is Thomas Dunford, a lutenist still in his twenties but already making people notice him with his strongly projected resonant tone, wide range of touch and dynamic, and effortlessly attentive musicianship. His five solos are a strong plus; ‘Lachrimae’ and ‘Fortune my foe’ are both seriously slow and free. This is Dowland to treasure.

Lindsay Kemp

REISSUES

Jonathan Freeman-Attwood on an Archiv archive revival and **Philip Clark** on a mega-Bernstein box

Ancient and modern-ish

Three classic collections of early music return to the catalogue



The birth of 'early music' is measured by many defining staging posts, according to where you're from and who you are. Yet DG's distinctive place in the heart of post-war collectors as the most blue-blooded of phonographic dispensers, for the culturally curious and aspirant, led to the first truly 'musicological' project

Archiv's three four-disc sets are both revelatory and reassuring

in sound – a globally acknowledged template for exploring six centuries of music, hitherto almost unknown.

The astutely named Archiv label, as the historical arm of DG, was unsurprisingly helmed by academics in the first 20 years of its existence. The first, Fred Hamel, with the didactic clarity of a seminal encyclopedia and text-book writer, divided the sacred and secular into 12 'research periods', from Gregorian chant to early forays into Mozart. Skilfully extricating pioneering figures and milestone performances from as many as six of these periods, Archiv presents three four-disc boxes which are both revelatory and reassuring, and just occasionally arcane to the point where repertoire takes precedence over musical interests.

The lute box is dedicated to the long-forgotten **Walter Gerwig** and represents a remarkable cross-section of the lutenist's

craft from early-15th-century German song to a Haydn 'cassation'. Such is the supreme remastering quality of these mono recordings that the ringing immediacy of Gerwig's dignified playing allows for even the slightest dance to convey its most tangible essence.

If the singing of the Milan and Ortiz collections is uneven, the procession of solo lute suites becomes increasingly diverting, perhaps because the later repertoire – Hoffer, Hinterleithner and Bach (one of very few recognisable composers) – draws out the serious musicianship and *galant* poise that lies at the heart of Gerwig's musical personality: never fussy, textually respectful and redolent of how free spirits in the 1950s could play and sing with such untangled instinct.

The father of modern viola da gamba-playing and co-founder of the Schola Cantorum Basiliensis, **August Wenzinger** is the subject of the most outstanding of the three releases. His significant contribution to the catalogue at the dawn of professional 'early music' recording (he made over 100) urges us to recall the beauty of conception he brings to each encounter, whether fantasy, sonata or suite. This is no mere history lesson of a bygone age; there may be slips and infelicities of the kind which today's viol groups would not countenance but there is regularly a poetic intensity at the heart of each phrase, a constant thread of authority and noble ambition.

These explorations in the expressive nether regions of Gibbons's three-part and Purcell's complete fantasies are a timely reminder of the musical range and depth of this supremely accomplished musician. The F major four-part Fantasy and six-part *In nomine* performances are among the most gloriously perceptive essays in this medium you're ever likely to hear, each hanging tantalisingly on the breath of *echt* Purcellian nostalgia. Not many continental musicians since have reached into this elusively indigenous melancholy so tellingly. By whatever means of recent technological 'dark arts', the pioneering 1954 Purcell readings sound even fuller than the digitally remastered version for Archiv's Purcell eight-CD 'Collection' box in 1995.

Of the remaining offerings, cultivated élan spans the entirety of Wenzinger's leisurely and warm-hearted Bach sonatas though Fritz Neumeier's obligato harpsichord is no match for the charisma of the gambist. The pick of the crop of the generous French disc is Marais's Suite in D, bursting with visceral personality, and untroubled by excessive 'à la mode' embellishment. Slightly less captivating is the disc of late-18th-century works with Wenzinger as cellist, though the Boccherini Quintet in E minor with guitar is as exquisite as anything in an outstanding homage to a truly pivotal figure.

Four CDs of **Gregorian Chant** might seem the hair shirt in this trio of freshly minted anthologies but the monks of the Benedictine Archabbey of St Martin in Beuron, on the upper River Danube, present a wonderfully varied repository of chant. The glories of this systematic seven-year recording programme with Archiv, made through the 1950s, represent a considerable document of outstanding monastic singing in a vibrant community. Their earthy, declamatory style is both crystal clear and yet also responds naturally to the contoured sentiments of each chant. The recorded sound is spatially rewarding and uncannily present from over 60 years ago. All boxes are presented with beautiful 'retro' packaging in the spirit of an enlightened respect for Archiv's rich legacy.

THE RECORDINGS

'Music for Lute' Gerwig

Archiv Ⓢ ④ 479 2598AB4

'Music for Viola da gamba' Wenzinger

Archiv Ⓢ ④ 479 2603AB4

'Gregorian Chant' Monks of Beuron

Archiv Ⓢ ④ 479 2593AB4



A question of taste

Bernstein's late-period recordings are controversial yet extraordinarily personal

Writing in *Gramophone's* October 1989 issue about the newly released Dvořák *New World* Symphony by **Leonard Bernstein** and the Israel Philharmonic, Edward Greenfield commented that Bernstein 'convinces us for the moment that this totally still, concentrated performance is exactly what Dvořák had in mind', a point of view well worth unpacking.

Did Bernstein really think that Dvořák would have approved of this 19-minute stretching of his *New World* Symphony's *Largo*; or that Elgar's uptight moustache would have bristled with delight at hearing 'Nimrod' transformed from enigma into crawling paradox; or that Bruckner would have relished the annexation of the *Scherzo* of his Ninth Symphony by a Mahler obsessive? Had any of Bernstein's conducting students tried to do similar they would surely have received short shrift; but at this stage in his career the specifics of what Dvořák or Bruckner wanted were no longer at the forefront of Bernstein's mind. The final curtain was about to fall and he wanted to say something extraordinary and personal



about these pieces – even at the cost of crossing over into territory that to anyone who wasn't Leonard Bernstein might have felt uneasily like re-composition.

The complete 'Leonard Bernstein Collection' from the Deutsche Grammophon

label salami-slices his late-period recording career alphabetically. This first volume moves through Beethoven and Bernstein's own music to Liszt, via Bizet, Brahms, Bruckner, Copland, Debussy, Dvořák, Elgar, Franck (coupled with Saint-Saëns and Roussel), Roy Harris (with William Schuman), Haydn, Hindemith and Ives, leaving the way open for Vol 2 to pick up the story with Mahler.

How far you're prepared to follow Bernstein down this potentially murky path of re-composition is, of course, down to taste, and these recordings have certainly tested the patience of many. This Dvořák *New World* Symphony, EG asserts, is 'incomparable', as though Bernstein had licence to defy the interpretative gravity that keeps everybody else's feet on the ground. But he's right. You'd have to be

away with the fairies to think this could be anyone's ideal *New World*. Assuming you're prepared to suspend your disbelief, though, the recording is a wondrous one-off – welcome to Bernstein's fantasy about Dvořák's symphony, with its internal logic and dimensions fully remapped and recontextualised.

Not all latter-day Bernstein provoked such controversy. The cycle of Beethoven symphonies he cut with the Vienna Philharmonic (1977-78) proved surprisingly up to speed with prevailing ideas about tempo (interesting to read in Jonathan Cott's *Dinner with Lenny* about Bernstein's admiration for Trevor Pinnock), while his Haydn – No 88 is Bernstein at his most kittenish – packs an authoritative punch. His VPO Brahms cycle (including the piano concertos with Krystian Zimerman) is more of a problem. Those push-pull tugs of tempo that recast Dvořák so powerfully rarely cut the mustard here. Brahms resists; as Will Self said in the March 2014 issue of *Gramophone*, 'something that incontrovertibly Brahmsian is like rock'.

But even in the wobbliest moments of Bernstein's Brahms – the finale of the Third Symphony being a prime example – the sounds and spectrum of shadings Bernstein was able to pull from an orchestra never wavered. His VPO Beethoven *Eroica* was one of the records that, when I encountered it during my early teens, changed my life. The physical hit and depth of the sound left me floating on an ecstatic high. Alongside some misfires – a disc of Debussy feels laboured – it's good to be reacquainted with some equally great records I'd forgotten about, especially Franck's Symphony in D minor, while Bernstein's performance of his own *Prelude, Fugue and Riffs* with the Vienna Philharmonic (bolstered you presume by guests) roars from beginning to end.

And a final word about packaging. The CDs slot inside a mammoth LP-shaped box-set, the loops of paper designed to hold them in place failing miserably. Weirdly, what looks like a sheet of grease-proof paper sits between the booklet and the discs, while that booklet itself – featuring read-it-all-before essays by Jamie Bernstein and Humphrey Burton and extracts from Nigel Simeone's *Leonard Bernstein Letters* – feels grudging and half-hearted. Surely Bernstein deserves better? **G**

THE RECORDING

'The Leonard Bernstein Collection, Vol 1'

DG © (59 CDs + **DVD**) 479 1047GB58

Opera



**David Patrick Stearns reviews
a Porgy from San Francisco:**
*'Nothing goes wrong with this production,
but nothing is all that right in Catfish Row
either'* ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 89**



**Richard Wigmore on Handel's
Orlando under René Jacobs:**
*'While some may protest at all this
interventionism, Jacobs is congenitally
incapable of dullness'* ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 90**

Bartók

Duke Bluebeard's Castle

Sir John Tomlinson *bass*.....**Bluebeard**
Michelle DeYoung *mez*.....**Judith**
Juliet Stevenson**Narrator**
Philharmonia Voices; Philharmonia Orchestra /
Esa-Pekka Salonen

Signum © SIGCD372 (67' • DDD • T/t)
Recorded live at the Konzerthaus, Vienna,
November 8, 2011



Sir John Tomlinson's
world-weary enactment
of the tortured
Bluebeard is variously

available under the batons of James Levine (Munich Philharmonic), Jukka-Pekka Saraste (BBC SO), Richard Farnes (Orchestra of Opera North, in English) and Bernard Haitink with the Berlin Philharmonic (1996). Some little while ago I recommended the Haitink version as vocally superior, Levine as the most compelling interpretation and the BBC SO Prom as a valuable memento of an occasion that many will doubtless want to revisit. Salonen's memorable reading was recorded live at the Vienna Konzerthaus on November 8, 2011, and for those who care about broken spells, I'm happy to report that there is no spell-breaking applause at the end of the performance. I wasn't sure about Juliet Stevenson's *Listen with Mother*-style delivery of the spoken Prologue – too polite by half – but as soon as Salonen cues the score's reptilian first bars, just after the one-minute mark, you can sense both a tightening of tension and Salonen's natural grasp of Bartók's richly suggestive tone-poetry.

Tomlinson himself tends to favour a dry, 'lowing' delivery, at times suspending vibrato. Try 3'11" into tr 1, where he invites Judith to answer his request to join him; and when he repeats his invitation, he seems almost desperate – needlessly, as it happens, because Michelle DeYoung sounds more than willing. Thereafter, Salonen pushes for some fierce accents while keeping the undulating Prologue restlessly on the move. Tomlinson suggests

real menace when he asks Judith why she made the visit (tr 1, 8'54"); and when she hammers on the first door three minutes later, the Philharmonia Voices do their bit with a ghostly sigh. As the subsequent doors open, Salonen and his players take centre stage, the instruments of torture sounding almost graphic in their impact, before the pace dips and the sunrise temporarily breaks through.

DeYoung is at her best as she glides effortlessly among the flora and fauna of Bluebeard's garden, while her lacerating C as the fifth door flies open to reveal Bluebeard's vast and beautiful kingdom is breathtaking. There's a very audible organ, too. The final climax is overwhelming because Salonen understands so well how the music must simultaneously rise to greet her and express Judith's tragedy.

Sound-wise, the score's vast dynamic curve is truthfully reproduced and while I would unhesitatingly recommend this recording for the sake of Michelle DeYoung, Salonen and the Philharmonia, Sir John's post-prime Bluebeard, although rich in drama and theatrical presence, can't compare with the best of his former selves, most notably under Bernard Haitink, with Anne Sofie von Otter and the Berlin Philharmonic on EMI. For opera-in-English fans, the Farnes recording is pretty impressive, too. **Rob Cowan**

Selected comparisons:

BPO, Haitink (9/96) (EMI) 556162-2

Munich PO, Levine (4/05) (OEHM) OC505

BBC SO, Saraste (9/05) (WARN) 2564 61953-2

Op North Orch, Farnes (7/06) (CHAN) CHAN3133

Britten

Death in Venice

John Graham-Hall *ten*.....**Gustav von Aschenbach**
Andrew Shore *bar*.....**Traveller/Elderly Fop/
..... Old Gondolier/Hotel Manager/Hotel Barber/
..... Leader of the Players/Voice of Dionysus**
Tim Mead *countertenor*.....**Voice of Apollo**
Sam Zaldivar *dncr*.....**Tadzio**
Chorus and Orchestra of English National Opera /
Edward Gardner

Stage director **Deborah Warner**

Video director **Ross MacGibbon**

Opus Arte © DVD OA1130D; © OABD7141D
(153' • NTSC • 16:9 • 1080p • DTS-HD MA5.1,
DTS5.1 & LPCM stereo • 0 • S/s)
Recorded live, June 18, 21 & 24, 2013



One of the advantages of watching opera on DVD is that you get the best seat in the house. In the theatre the panoramic projections that form the backdrop to English National Opera's production of *Death in Venice* could not be seen to full effect from some angles but Opus Arte gives us an ideal vantage point. It might have seemed that no DVD could surpass the beauty of Pier Luigi Pizzi's inimitably Italian staging from La Fenice but Deborah Warner's production is surely its equal – visually ravishing in its luminous images of sea and sky, reflecting shadowy gondoliers and heat-hazed outlines of the Venetian skyline. The lighting designer, Jean Kalman, deserves special credit.

In the central role of Gustav von Aschenbach, John Graham-Hall takes us on a devastating journey. Essentially a character tenor, he is parsimonious with the opera's vocal beauty (the recitatives are invariably more telling than the passages of arioso) but he has stamina, clear words and the ability to penetrate to the heart of the role. Highly charged from the start, his Aschenbach is seen to collapse before our eyes, torn apart from inside by the psychological battle being waged within. In his seven-fold Dionysiac role, Andrew Shore is sometimes dry of voice but presents a vivid collection of personalities (if only the recent obituaries of John Shirley-Quirk had not reminded us how powerfully insidious a presence he was in this opera). With Tim Mead as a radiant Apollo and Sam Zaldivar a cheekily down-to-earth Tadzio, all the supporting parts are well cast, and Edward Gardner is as ever an authoritative Britten conductor, exercising a grip on every bar that makes the opera seem not a note too long.



Devastating journey: John Graham-Hall portrays Aschenbach with 'the ability to penetrate to the heart of the role' in ENO's 2013 production of Britten's *Death in Venice*

It is criminal that the original production with Pears as Aschenbach was not filmed. But we are lucky to have a real choice now on DVD, from Glyndebourne's 1990 production with Robert Tear's unsentimental Aschenbach to the visually sumptuous *La Fenice* production. This latest release, expertly filmed by Opus Arte, is arguably the best of all. No other performance on DVD has presented the psychological dilemma posed by Thomas Mann and Britten with such intensity.

Richard Fairman

Selected comparisons:

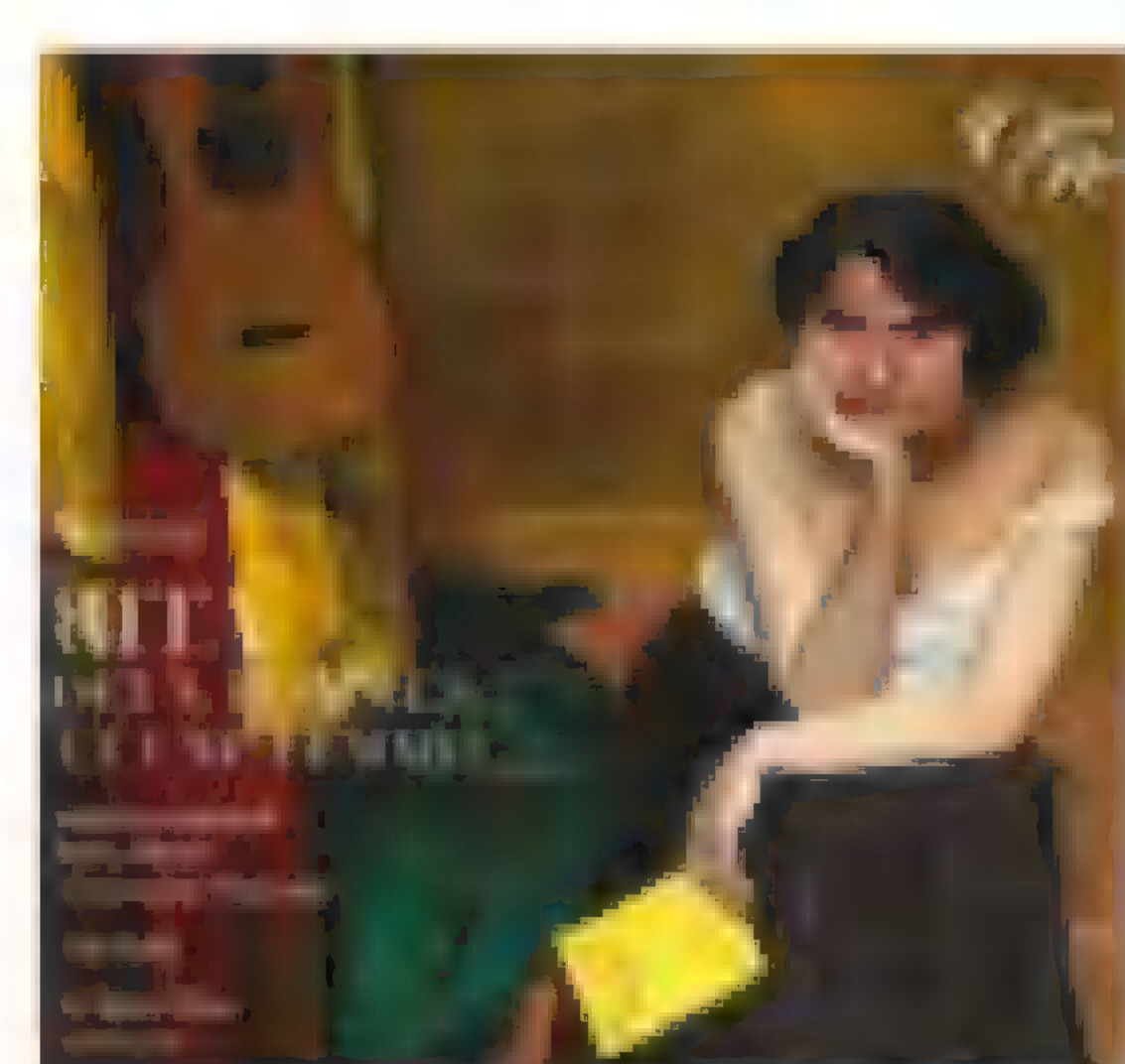
Glyndebourne, Jenkins (8/01) (ARTH) DVD 100 172

Fenice, Bartoletti (2/11) (DYNA) DVD 33608; Blu-ray 55608

Donizetti

Rita (*Deux hommes et une femme*)

Katarina Karnéus *mez* **Rita**
Barry Banks *ten* **Pepé**
Christopher Maltman *bar* **Gasparo**
Hallé Orchestra / Sir Mark Elder
 Opera Rara © ORC50 (73' • DDD • S/T/t)



The history of Donizetti's *Rita*, completed in 1839 but left unperformed at

the composer's death, is of a complexity out of all proportion with the work itself (the synopsis fills half a page of the booklet here; the accompanying essay, by the editor of the critical edition on which the recording is based, takes up a full 14). This new release restores the original text – with linking dialogue – as well as the opera's original subtitle; *Deux hommes et une femme* is considerably less off-putting than the *La femme battu* that was used when the work was finally premiered – after all sorts of legal and familial wranglings – at Paris's Opéra-Comique in 1860.

One's enthusiasm for the score's springy rhythms and easy melodic invention might justifiably still be dampened by the libretto and its jovial engagement with the theme of domestic violence. But if you can take that in the spirit it was surely meant – it features standard comic types, and arguably only makes explicit what is usually implicit in so many comic operas – there's an enormous amount to enjoy. And on this recording, the chief pleasure is probably the gloriously buoyant and beautifully turned playing of the Hallé Orchestra, with Mark Elder finding an ideal balance between subtlety and airy exuberance.

The 'two men and a woman' Opera Rara has found clearly enjoy themselves

immensely, too, and the sense of fun is infectious. As the formidable Rita, Katarina Karnéus communicates the necessary strength of voice and character but is always ready to introduce a smile into the sound. Barry Banks sings with a good comic touch as poor Pepé, sounding nervous and, when he sees a way out of his unwanted marriage, suitably overjoyed. As Rita's former husband – presumed dead – Christopher Maltman is appropriately confident and forceful. There could be a bit more in the way of *bel canto* elegance from both men but they and Karnéus put the action across vividly, in excellent sung and spoken French. **Hugo Shirley**

Gershwin

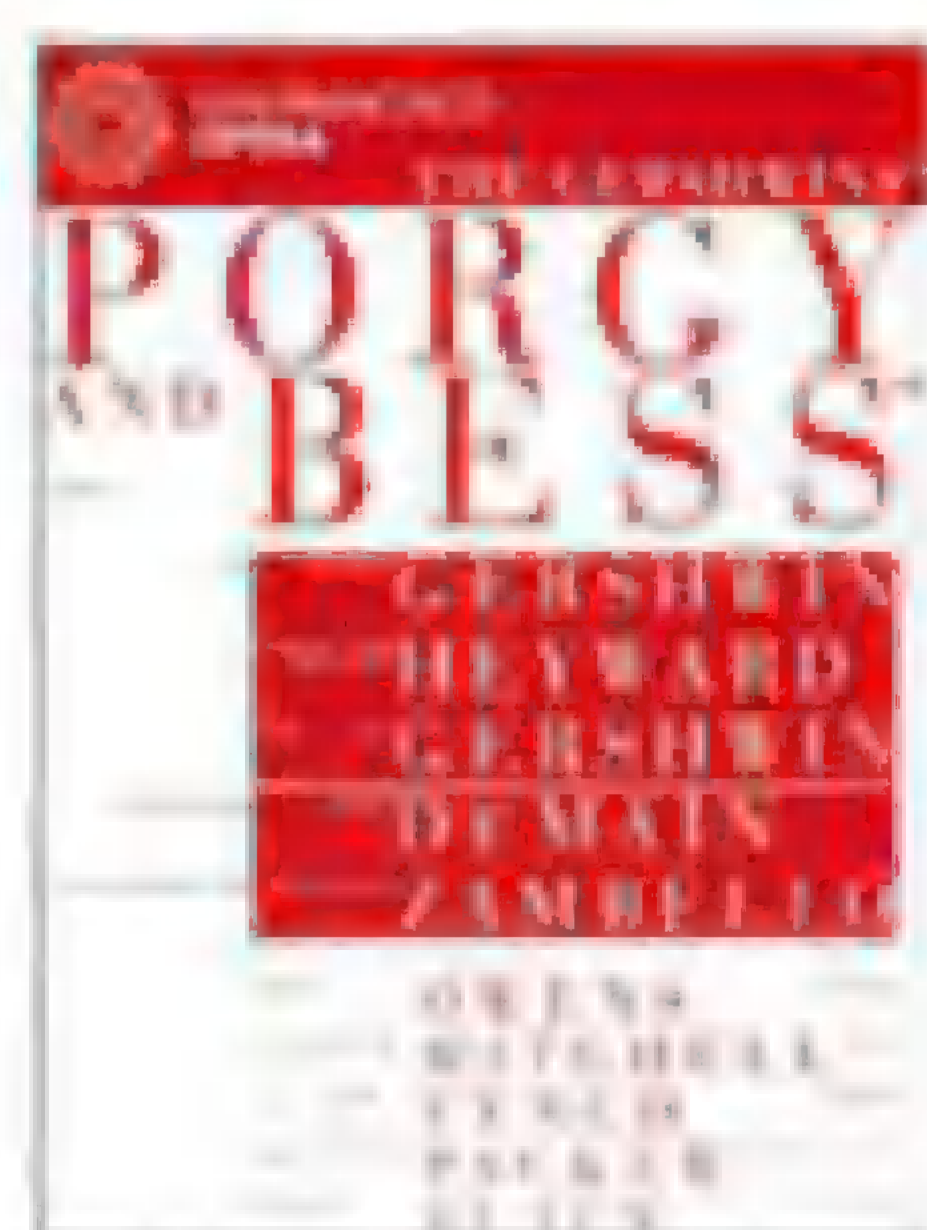
Porgy and Bess

Eric Owens *bass bar* **Porgy**
Laquita Mitchell *sop* **Bess**
Angel Blue *sop* **Clara**
Chauncey Packer *ten* **Sportin' Life**
Eric Greene *bar* **Jake**
Karen Slack *sop* **Serena**
Alteouise deVaughn *mez* **Maria**
Lester Lynch *bar* **Crown**
San Francisco Opera Chorus and Orchestra / John DeMain

Stage director **Francesca Zambello**

Video director **Frank Zamacona**

EuroArts ② ② DVD 205 9638; ② ② 205 9634
(158' + 29' • NTSC • 16:9 • 1080i • DTS-HD MA5.1,
DTS5.1 & PCM stereo • 0 • S/s). Bonus material:
interviews with artists and creative team
Recorded live, June 2009



Times are tough for seasoned admirers of *Porgy and Bess*. The recent Broadway production sliced, diced and

reorchestrated the score in ways that drained the languid lushness from Gershwin's original. Nothing goes wrong with this production of the real thing. Yet nothing is all that right in Catfish Row, this enclave of South Carolina 'Gullah' culture where people fish, work, gamble, brawl and take care of each other. Perhaps because the opera is politically incorrect in some circles (the novelist Toni Morrison is particularly allergic to the grammar lapses in 'Bess, you is my woman now'), the production doesn't always trust its material.

Much of the cast (and all of the chorus) sing as loud as possible – the amplitude rendering the libretto's patois strangely unnatural. Stage director Francesca Zambello moves its setting from the 1920s to the 1950s (Kittawah Island is an abandoned amusement park) to make it more immediate. Also, the stage is relentlessly animated in ways that feel forced. Characters don't live their roles; they sell them.

The disabled beggar Porgy has traded his goat-drawn cart for a single crutch. Bess wears an unflattering 1950s-style red-head wig that's a source of puzzlement until late in the opera when her sometime boyfriend Crown sings the show-stopper 'A red-headed woman', the one song that lacks solid dramatic motivation but now partly explains his attachment to Bess.

A key moment such as Bess's rape by Crown is extremely lurid, with no element of seduction. Crown's murder by Porgy isn't a noble victory: he stabs Crown in the back. Though the production is realistic, expressionistic lighting changes make the often-cut 'Bazzard Song' look like a total eclipse of the sun.

The singers all have their strengths – aided by conductor John DeMain's subtle *rubato* and sometimes indulgent tempi that also tax momentum. The accomplished Verdi mezzo Alteouise deVaughn is an important presence as Maria, the plain-spoken conscience of Catfish Row. But Chauncey Packer (Sportin' Life) seems determined to show every single move he knows, distracting from his considerable

vocal powers. Laquita Mitchell sings Bess as if auditioning for Brünnhilde.

Eric Owens is an established Wagnerite but doesn't sing like one with his mid-weight, beautifully coloured vocalism. Theatrically, though, his Porgy only comes alive amid inner conflict, such as giving Bess permission to go back with Crown, and later when he whispers to himself 'I'm on my way' (to New York).

Here's the really bad news: this is the best *Porgy and Bess* video out there. The Trevor Nunn production on EMI is not a live performance but a low-budget, badly lip-synched studio production using the excellent Simon Rattle recording as a soundtrack. I prefer the charismatically cast 1959 film despite its musical cuts and Otto Preminger's static, stylised direction. But try finding a decent DVD transfer.

David Patrick Stearns

Selected comparison:

Glyndebourne, Rattle (6/89⁸, 10/01) (EMI) DVD 492497-9

Handel

Orlando

Bejun Mehta *countertenor* Orlando
Sophie Karthäuser *sop* Angelica
Kristina Hammarström *mez* Medoro
Sunhae Im *sop* Dorinda
Konstantin Wolff *bass-bar* Zoroastro
B'Rock Orchestra Ghent / René Jacobs
Archiv ② ② 479 2199AH2 (160' • DDD • S/T/t)



With this new recording, based on a production at La Monnaie, *Orlando*

now rivals *Giulio Cesare* as the best-served Handel opera on disc. True to his reputation, Jacobs duly plays up the opera's antic and disruptive aspects. Animated by ever-changing continuo colours (including lute, harp, organ and two vigorously proactive harpsichords), recitatives crackle with dramatic energy. Wind and thunder machines work overtime, irritatingly so in the exquisite Sinfonia in which the magician-philosopher Zoroastro restores Orlando to his senses. There are avian twitterings galore. Nor is Jacobs squeamish about tweaking Handel's scoring, as with the unscripted recorders in the shepherdess Dorinda's 'Ho un certo rossore' and Orlando's famous mad scene. Yet while some may protest at all this interventionism, Jacobs is congenitally incapable of dullness.

With three cellos and three double basses, many of the sonorities, not least in the recitatives involving Zoroastro and/or Orlando, are uncommonly weighty. The

musette drones in Dorinda's arias have a raw, demotic edge, a far cry from the etherealised rusticity evoked by William Christie in his Erato recording. Typically, Jacobs favours mobile tempi, sometimes controversially, as in the beautiful Act 1 trio where Angelica and Medoro seek to console Dorinda, or Medoro's dulcet 'Verdi allori', which here becomes a jaunty minuet. Indeed, Jacobs often seems to minimise the element of nostalgic pastoral touchingly caught by Christie.

The cast, though, is more than a match for the competition. The unstable Orlando is perhaps the most dramatically challenging of Handel's castrato roles. Combining histrionic flair, terrific agility in rapid 'divisions' and a wide palette of colours, Bejun Mehta rises superbly to its demands. He brings a musing inwardness to his opening cavatina and a finely judged balance of pathos, distraction and unhinged fury to the mad scene, singing the final repeat of the gavotte 'Vaghe pupille' as if in a trance.

Konstantin Wolff dispatches Zoroastro's imposing arias cleanly and stylishly, though without the ideal weight and authority for the opera's benign master-of-ceremonies. Low notes, a speciality of Antonio Montagnana who created the role in 1733, lack resonance. With her warm, evenly produced mezzo, Kristina Hammarström makes a sympathetic figure of the rather passive Medoro, almost vindicating Jacobs's spritely tempo for 'Verdi allori'. Sophie Karthäuser, with a hint of steel in her pellucid soprano, catches all the tenderness and passion of Angelica's music: formidable in anger (Angelica is, after all, a queen), she phrases the elegiac 'Verdi piante' with sensuous grace. The endearing figure of Dorinda, unlucky in love yet distilling a naive wisdom, is portrayed with charm and spirit by Sunhae Im, much more in her element here than in some Jacobs recordings. If Christie's recording, consistently well sung and conducted *con amore*, is a safer first choice, Jacobs's boldly theatrical *Orlando* is a predictably vivid addition to the Handel discography.

Richard Wigmore

Selected comparisons:

Christie (9/96⁸) (WARN) 2564 69653-2

D Purcell

The Judgment of Paris

Anna Dennis *sop* Venus
Amy Freston *sop* Pallas
Ciara Hendrick *mez* Juno
Samuel Boden *ten* Paris
Ashley Riches *bar* Mercury
Rodolfus Choir; Spiritato! / Julian Perkins
Resonus ② ② RES10128 (79' • DDD • T)



'At last we have a recording of John Eccles's *Judgment of Paris*', wrote Julie

Anne Sadie of the Early Opera Company's release (Chandos, 6/09). Well amen to that, and welcome now to a first recording of Daniel Purcell's setting of the same Congreve one-act text. That there are two versions, both composed in 1701, is because they were entries in a competition (won by a third *Judgment*, by John Weldon) designed to promote all-sung opera in English at a time when there might still have been a future for it before the onslaught of Italian opera.

Daniel Purcell was probably the younger brother of Henry and had notable theatre experience, having among other things completed Henry's score for *The Indian Queen*. Of the *Judgment* entrants his is unsurprisingly the most 'Purcellian'. The atmosphere is richly scored and expansive, unfolding in florid and sophisticatedly inflected vocal writing at a relaxed pace that makes it more like a hybrid of opera and ode than the more plain-speaking and theatrically focused offering from Eccles. Indeed, its high-flown manner, plus the fact that it lasts nearly half an hour longer than the Eccles, could explain why it failed to win. Yet if it is a tad self-indulgent as a stage work, it is still a good listen, its virtues including colourful and well differentiated music for the goddesses – Juno, Pallas and Venus – whose charms are judged by shepherd Paris.

Spiritato! and the Rodolfus Choir are both young ensembles, and if more polish may be expected in years to come, they show heartening dramatic energy under Julian Perkins's assured direction (although it is a pity that some of the gaps between tracks impede dramatic momentum). The soloists cope reasonably well with Purcell's heavy-duty melismas but again more experience may allow them to introduce more light and shade. The pick of them is Samuel Boden, who as an enraptured Paris sounds like the kind of intelligent and vocally comfortable high tenor to watch for, but I also enjoyed the aristocratic elegance of Anna Dennis's Venus.

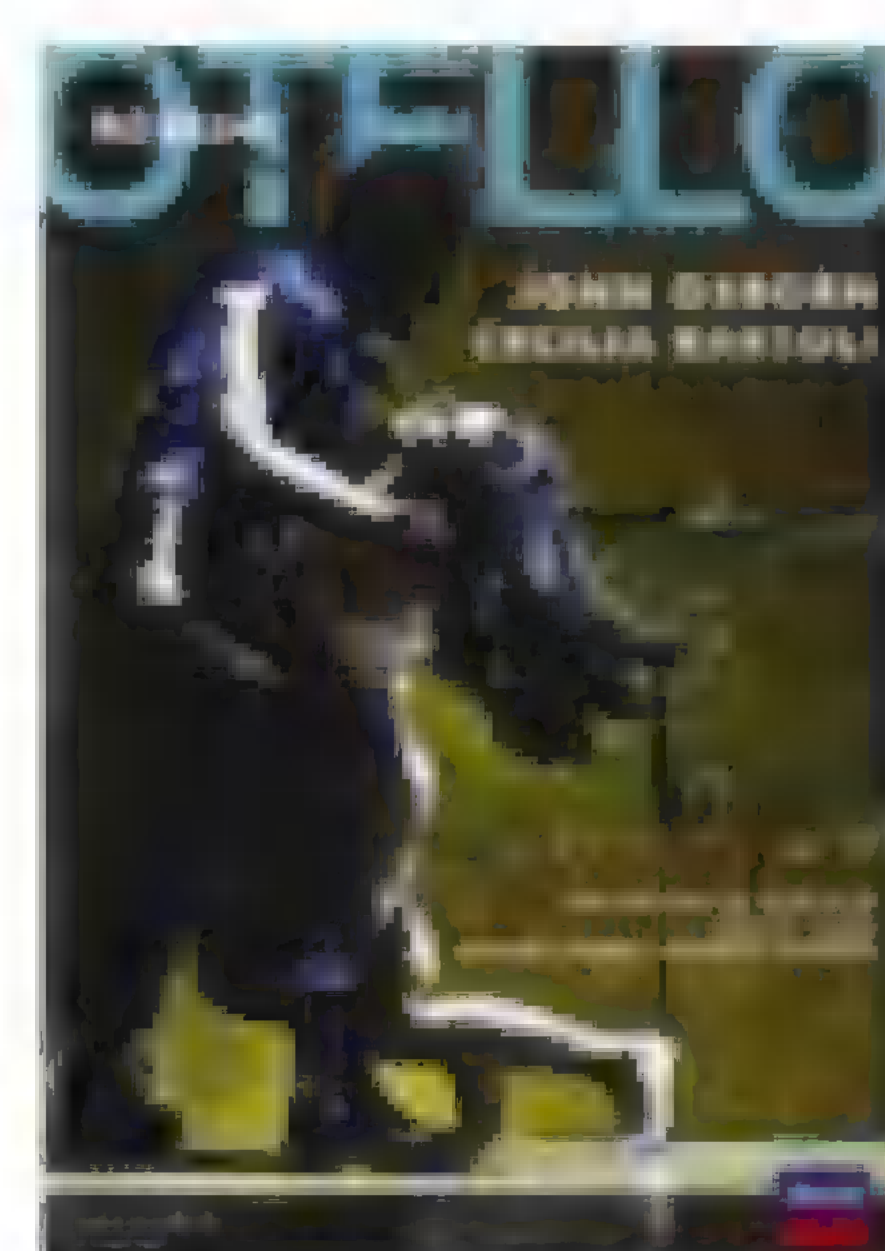
Well done to Resonus for jumping in where others have not. Who now will take on the Weldon? **Lindsay Kemp**

Rossini

Otello

John Osborn *ten* **Otello**
Cecilia Bartoli *mez* **Desdemona**

Peter Kálmán *bar* **Elmiro Balberigo**
Edgardo Rocha *ten* **Iago**
Liliana Nikiteanu *mez* **Emilia**
Javier Camarena *ten* **Rodrigo**
Nicola Pamio *ten* **Doge**
Ilker Arcayürek *ten* **Gondoliere**
Zurich Opera Supplementary Chorus; Orchestra
La Scintilla of the Zurich Opera / Muhai Tang
Stage directors **Moshe Leiser** and **Patrice Caurier**
Video director **Olivier Simonnet**
Decca (DVD) 074 3863DH; (Blu-ray) 074 3865DH
(156' • NTSC • 16:9 • DTS-HD MA5.1, DTS5.1 & LPCM stereo • 0 • S/s)
Recorded live, March 2012



Rossini's *Otello* has had a handful of stagings in recent years but none as potent as this. Conceived for the appropriately

intimate spaces of the Zurich Opera, where this tautly shot telecast was made, the production has as its headline act the Desdemona of Cecilia Bartoli – appropriately so since it is Desdemona who stands at the centre of Rossini's tragic *dramma*. Not that Bartoli is treated as the star. This is very much an ensemble performance, meticulously staged and intelligently sung.

The staging updates the action, though in the hands of directors Moshe Leiser and Patrice Caurier the update is discreet and finely managed. The Venetian setting cannot be changed – what would become of the offstage gondolier's song which has haunted audiences down the years? – nor does it require any special directorial intervention to point up the elements of racial conflict which Maria Berio's libretto makes no attempt to disguise. Men in suits congratulating a successful commander-in-chief whose colour is a problem for some is not without its contemporary resonance.

The use of modern 'effects' is sparing but telling. I think of Desdemona copying out the words of the gondolier's meditation on the pain of the remembered time, the paint dripping red down the palazzo wall; or, a little later, Desdemona taking out a wind-up gramophone to play the haunting harp solo which prefaces the Willow Song.

The performance is a powerful one musically. The opera's high points come in the lyric writing for Desdemona in Act 3 and the brutal confrontations between Desdemona, her father Elmiro (chillingly played by Peter Kálmán as a corporate power-broker), her would-be lover Rodrigo (Javier Camarena, superb in his big Act 2 aria and properly angst-ridden throughout) and Otello himself. Quite a lot of *Otello*, of

Act 1 in particular, is played in accompanied recitative. One of the strengths of this production is the way Bartoli's hand-picked cast plays these recitatives, 'lifting' the words to give the text eloquence and point. John Osborn's Otello – a role that has no set-piece arias – is especially fine in this respect.

Bartoli herself has come a long way since an early recital disc (Decca, 9/89 – nla) on which her account of the Willow Song and Prayer was little more than an inventory of the notes, dutifully sounded. The voice is darker now, a touch husky perhaps in its very lowest register but gloriously full and free higher up. This is a powerful performance, strongly limned, freighted with feeling.

The Zurich house has a long tradition of using period instruments where appropriate. Here the playing of the in-house Orchestra La Scintilla under veteran Chinese conductor Muhai Tang is as compelling as it is assured, not least in the Grand Guignol of the murder scene (more Berio than Shakespeare but here shrewdly staged). Stendhal described the opera's impact as 'volcanic' and so it seems. Closely miked sound, vivid and well defined, helps the cause. **Richard Osborne**

Royer


Pyrrhus

Alain Buet *bass* **Pyrrhus**
Jeffrey Thompson *ten* **Acamas**
Emmanuelle de Negri *sop* **Polyxène**
Nicole Dubrovitch *sop* **Ismène**
Guillemette Laurens *mez* **Eriphile**
Laurent Collobert *bass* **Ghost of Achilles**
Virgile Ancely *bass* **Mars (Prologue)**
Edwige Parat *sop* **Minerve (Prologue)**
Christophe Gautier *bass* **Jupiter (Prologue)**
Les Enfants d'Apollon / Michael Greenberg
Alpha (M) ② ALPHA953 (141' • DDD • T/t)



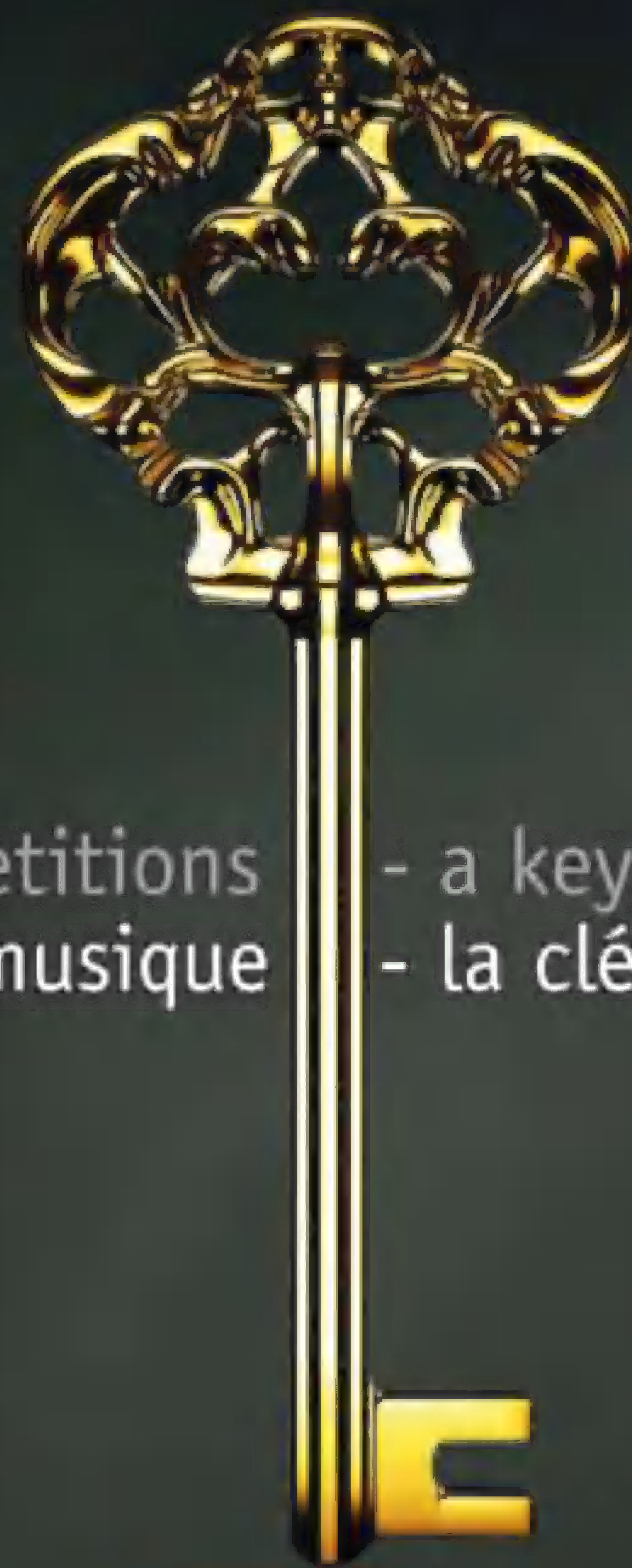
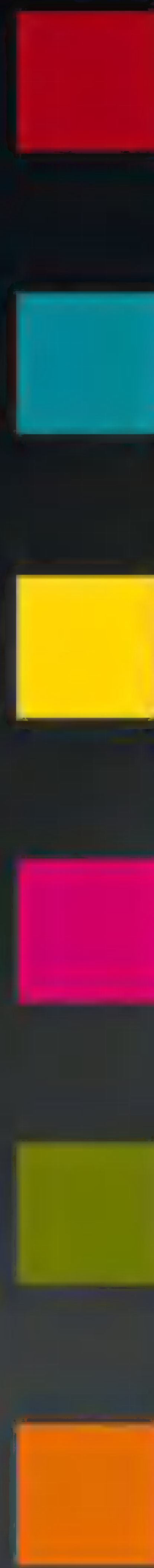
Joseph-Nicolas-Pancrace Royer (1703-55) was the master of music at

the Paris Opéra during the early 1730s, a leading light of the city's famous Concert Spirituel, had a heated public argument with Rameau in 1742, and later got on the wrong side of Voltaire. Musicologist and harpsichordist Lisa Goode Crawford has instigated this ambitious recording of *Pyrrhus* (1730), Royer's only *tragédie lyrique*. It was the last in a series of more than 20 works created for Paris across four decades that depicted episodes from the Trojan war – although French literary tradition evolved these stories far from




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Euripides: the Trojan princess Polyxena (the youngest daughter of King Priam) kills herself because she is irrevocably torn between duty to her defeated people and secret love for Pyrrhus (the son of Achilles, whose angry ghost proclaims Polyxena's doom). The action is complicated by the machinations of the evil sorceress Eriphile (who has been promised to Pyrrhus) and the Greek warrior Acamas (who wants Polyxena for himself).

In this performance the choir sopranos sing distractingly flat at times but the band play with soft assurance, and the oboes and bassoon are particularly poignant in the rondeau and menuets during the prologue for Mars and Minerva. The union of drama and music heats up when the jilted sorceress Eriphile and the forlorn Acamas forge their uneasy alliance during Act 2: flutes adorn Acamas's futile expression of hope ('Charmant espoir'), sung sweetly by Jeffrey Thompson. The conclusions to acts are the most memorable musical set-pieces: the closing sections of Act 3 present Eriphile's bitter confrontation with Pyrrhus and climaxes with her summoning the Eumenides (the Deities of Vengeance) to wreak vengeance on her rival. At the end of the opera, Emmanuelle de Negri conveys tragic nobility in Polyxena's inexorable suicide. Anyone hoping for something on a par with Rameau will be disappointed; but this accomplished performance reveals that Royer endeavoured to advance French tragic opera beyond its Lully-esque roots.

David Vickers

Vinci

Artaserse

Philippe Jaroussky *countertenor* Artaserse
Max Emanuel Cencic *countertenor* Mandane
Juan Sancho *tenor* Artabano
Franco Fagioli *countertenor* Arbace
Valer Barna-Sabadus *countertenor* Semira
Yuriy Mynenko *countertenor* Megabise

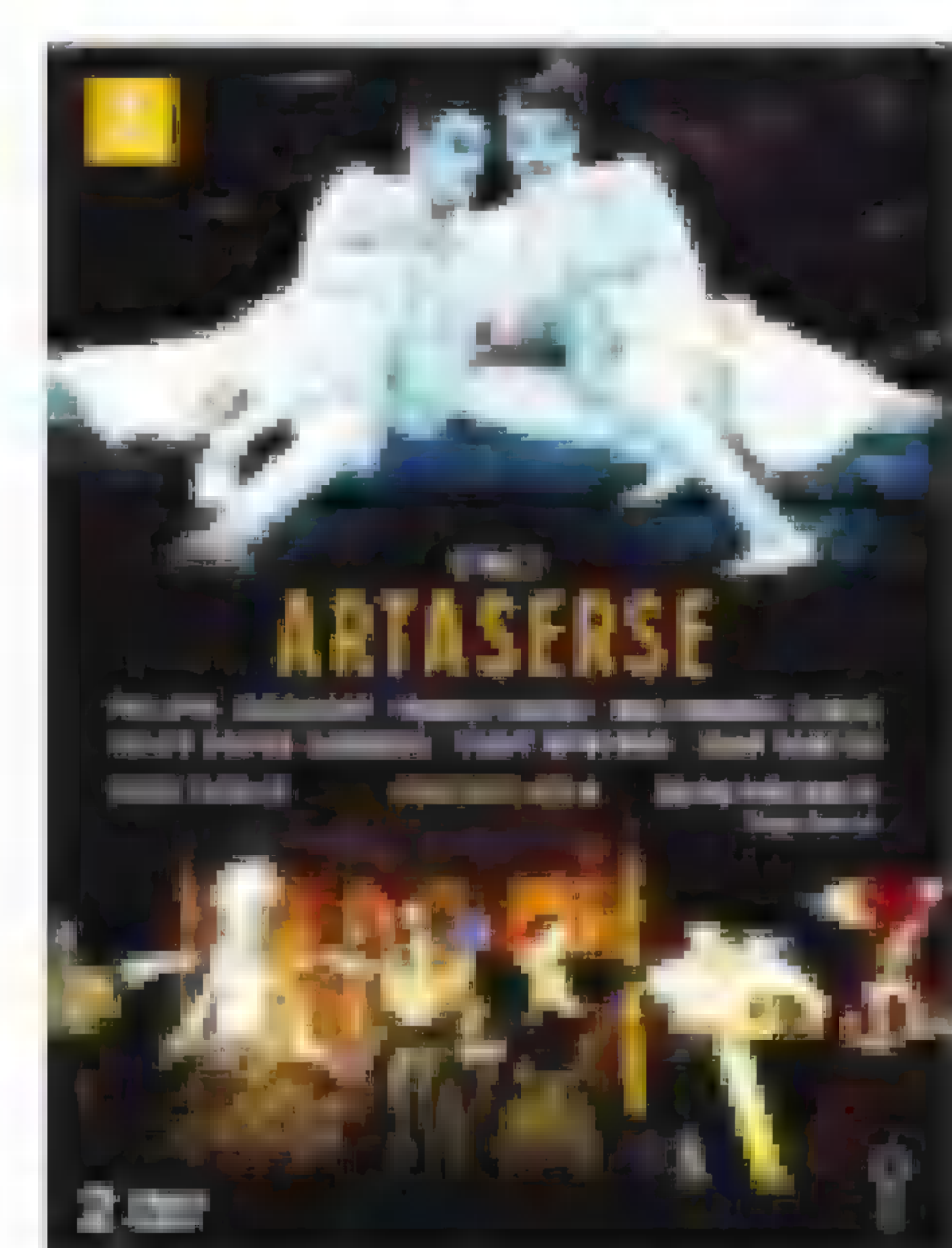
Concerto Köln / Diego Fasolis

Stage director Silviu Purcărete

Video director Louise Narboni

Erato ® ② DVD 2564 63232-3

(3h 21' • NTSC • 16:9 • DD5.1 & PCM stereo • 0 • s)



Artaserse was first performed at the Teatro delle Dame in Rome on February 4, 1730.

(Less than four months later Leonardo Vinci was dead, possibly poisoned as the result of an injudicious love affair.) The libretto was by Metastasio: it became extremely popular, Vinci's being the first

of nearly 90 settings (including two each by Jommelli and Bertoni). A CD recording was warmly welcomed by David Vickers (Virgin, 1/12). The performers on this DVD are identical, save for Juan Sancho replacing Daniel Behle as Artabano; the musical text is the same, apart from the omission of two arias in Act 3, for Semira and Mandane respectively.

The first thing to say is that it is wonderful to have another example, following the recent DVD series of operas by Pergolesi, of the 'Neapolitan' style that proved so influential. But although I enjoyed the CDs, I am less enamoured of this staging. As with the Paris production of Massenet's *Werther* (2/11) – is this becoming a French trademark? – we see entrances and exits from the wings; stagehands provide umbrellas or help the cast to dress. The décor is simple, with a platform that rotates from time to time. The costumes, on the other hand, are extremely elaborate. There are full-bottomed wigs, enormous plumes, and inverted horns that make the villainous Artabano look like a disgruntled bull.

As David Vickers reported in his review (to which I would refer you for a summary of the plot), women were not allowed to appear on stage in Rome, and there are no female singers in the cast here. We have long since become accustomed to mezzo-sopranos singing castrato parts: casting men in women's roles is for me – visually, at any rate – a step too far. Fans, pearls, false bosoms: Mandane and Semira together are inescapably reminiscent of Hinge & Bracket. The artifice extends to the male characters, too, with their rouge and lipstick. All have whited faces, like Pierrots.

Having sopranos – and they really are sopranos, not countertenors – in the male roles certainly gives one an inkling of what it was like in 1730. The singing is terrific, though some of the cadenzas range so high that you might get a sore throat. See for yourself; but I shall return to the CDs, where, as they say with radio, the pictures are better. Richard Lawrence

Vivaldi

L'incoronazione di Dario

Anders Dahlin *tenor* Dario
Sara Mingardo *contralto* Statira
Delphine Galou *contralto* Argene
Riccardo Novaro *baritone* Niceno
Roberta Mameli *soprano* Alinda
Lucia Cirillo *mezzo-soprano* Oronte
Sofia Soloviy *soprano* Arpago
Giuseppina Bridelli *contralto* Flora
Accademia Bizantina / Ottavio Dantone
Naïve ® ③ OP30553 (2h 56' • DDD)



The plot of *L'incoronazione di Dario* (1717) revolves around three rival

claimants to the throne of Persia. The shrewd lord Dario, the conceited nobleman Oronte and the gung-ho soldier Arpago agree to lay their arms aside and instead compete to woo the late king Cyrus's eligible but amusingly naive daughter Statira – whose considerably smarter younger sister Argene wants Dario (and the throne) for herself. Vivaldi's choice of a mischievous libretto that was already 33 years old was probably obscured because the Venetian public were promised 'many masks and sumptuous costumes'.

Vivaldi's score is performed with a commendable balance of vigour and finesse by a fine cast led by tenor Anders Dahlin (who sings Dario admirably but does not have any of the opera's most memorable arias). Statira's finest music is sung eloquently by Sara Mingardo in partnership with compelling instrumental contributions: a viola all'inglese (ie bass viol) forms a gorgeous obbligato companion to Mingardo's ardent singing in 'L'adorar beltà che piace', which generates a touching irony because it is presented as a love cantata composed by the old man Niceno, who secretly yearns for her. The loveliest moment in Act 2 is when Statira tries clumsily to declare love to Dario in 'Se palparti in sen'; Mingardo's delectably murmured singing is accompanied by recorders doubling muted violins and a *pizzicato* bass-line. There is more rapturous love music in Act 3's 'Sentirò fra ramo e ramo', with Mingardo's breezy alto in dialogue with *concertante* violin and cello. Other cast members are routinely excellent, including Delphine Galou's scheming Argene, Roberta Mameli's affronted Alinda (Oronte's jilted fiancée) and Riccardo Novaro's hapless Niceno. Some scenes are blatantly humorous, such as the trumpet-laden opening of Act 3 ('Col splendour del sacro Alloro'), during which arch-rivals Oronte and Arpago simultaneously turn up adorned ostentatiously with crowns and sceptres. Ottavio Dantone's astute pacing of the anti-heroic comedy and Accademia Bizantina's crystalline playing mean that this new instalment in Naïve's Vivaldi Edition is more consistently accomplished than Gilbert Bezzina's pioneering recording (long overdue an adequately documented reissue from Harmonia Mundi – 12/86, nla). David Vickers



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Hibla Gerzmava

Bellini Norma – Overture; Ah! bello a me ritorna
Donizetti L'elisir d'amore – Quanto amore^a.
 Lucia di Lammermoor – Regnava nel silenzio...
 Quando rapito in estasi **Mozart** La clemenza
 di Tito – Overture. Vesperae solennes de
 confessore, K339 – Laudate Dominum
Rossini Il barbiere di Siviglia – Overture;
 Largo al factotum^a **R Strauss** Morgen, Op 27
 No 4^b **Verdi** Il corsaro – Non so le tette immagini.
 Otello – Desdemona rea; Mia madre aveva...
 Piangea cantando...Ave Maria
Hibla Gerzmava *sop* with ^a**Arsen Sogomonian** *bar*
National Philharmonic Orchestra of Russia /
Vladimir Spivakov *hvn*
 Melodiya © MELCD100 2212 (75' • DDD)
 Recorded live at Svetlanov Hall, Moscow,
 October 14, 2013



The circumstances of the recording aren't promising: a one-off concert

with an up-and-coming soprano singing an impressive though exhausting range of arias and duets. Yet, almost immediately, one senses the presence of significant vocal personality.

Having served what sounds like an intensive apprenticeship as a member of the Stanislavsky and Nemirovich-Danchenko Music Theatre since 1995, the Abkhazia-born soprano Hibla Gerzmava so seamlessly fuses vocal elegance and dramatic conviction that lesser-known arias such as the one from Verdi's *Il corsaro* leave you wondering why this music isn't heard constantly.

Comparisons with the concert's winning though somewhat outclassed guest baritone, Arsen Sogomonian, show what sets Gerzmava apart: her ability to find latent meaning in the most formulaic vocal runs but without distorting the basic shape. Phrases come out in long, varied complete sentences, even amid the vocally fractured comedy of the *L'elisir d'amore* duet. Give her a fail-safe scene such as Desdemona's Willow Song from *Otello* and she knows exactly when to let the music support her. It's mesmerising, right down to the final Amen, sung with a kind of finality that tells you the character is accepting her dire fate with supreme dignity – supported with great sensitivity by conductor Vladimir Spivakov (who doubles as violinist in their mesmerising encore, Strauss's 'Morgen').

I'm not sure Norma is a promising role. 'Casta diva' starts in the lower, weaker area of her voice and it's the one part of the recital where her rhetorical compass has less clarity of purpose. Also, her pitch is

obscured by vibrato. But I would love her to prove me wrong. **David Patrick Stearns**

'Love Duets'

Bernstein West Side Story – One hand, one heart
Donizetti L'elisir d'amore – Caro elisir!...Esulti pur la
 barbara **Forrest** Kismet – And this is my beloved
Gounod Faust – Il se fait tard! Adieu! **Loesser** Guys
 and Dolls – I'll Know **Mascagni** L'amico Fritz –
 Suzel, buon di **Massenet** Manon – Toi!
 Vous!...N'est-ce plus ma main **Puccini** La bohème –
 O soave fanciulla **Rodgers** Carousel – If I loved you
Verdi Rigoletto – Signor né principe...Addio!
 speranza. La traviata – Un di felice
Ailyn Pérez *sop* **Stephen Costello** *ten*
BBC Symphony Orchestra / Patrick Summers
 Warner Classics © 2564 63348-5 (66' • DDD • T)



Almost everything about this disc is inevitable. A real-life couple, Ailyn Pérez

and Stephen Costello share much of the same repertoire, their significant points of musical compatibility (mid-weight lyric singers able with coloratura technique) being highlighted by their distinct personalities. She's a warm-hearted, latter-day Victoria de los Angeles from Chicago and he's from the rockier terrains of blue-collar Philadelphia with an increasing vocal resemblance to the young Alfredo Kraus.

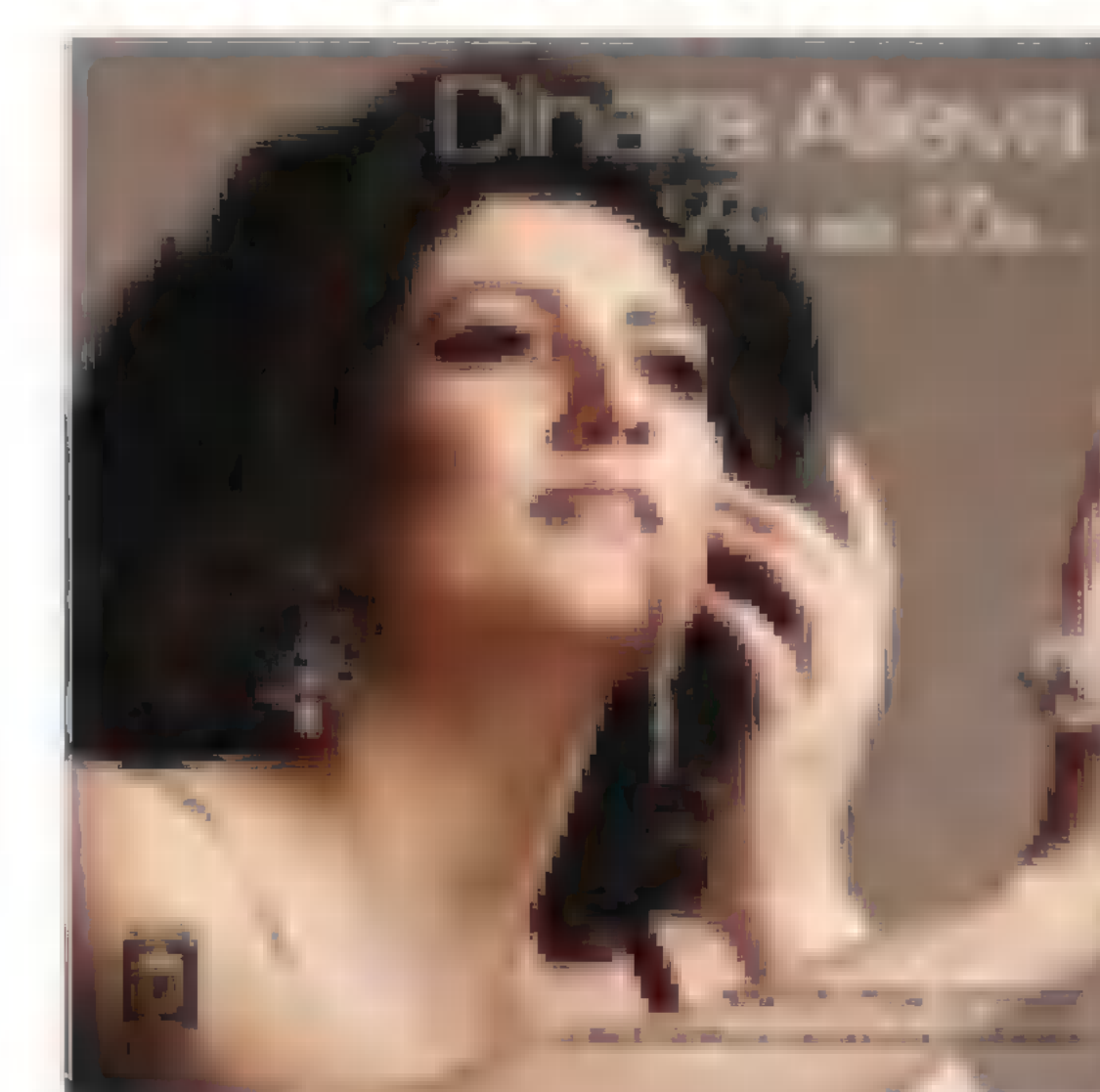
Why didn't they make this disc years ago? For all their earlier successes – both made their Salzburg Festival debuts in 2008 – Costello needed to get his tonsils out of the way with 2011 surgery before his voice could truly bloom. She had to conquer her pitch variability in high-wire lyric soprano roles such as Violetta (which she now sings with more solid technique than almost anybody out there). So this disc's time has come, and it's a warm bath. No problems. Much pleasure. And thrills – plus solidity, with Patrick Summers conducting the BBC Symphony Orchestra.

They're basically Italianate singers, with rounded phrases whose resolutions are delayed with that extra, emotionally infused nanosecond rendered so convincingly that one isn't going to begrudge them taking a less-than-Gallic approach in the Act 2 duet from *Manon* (so many others do the same). And later on, their more cultivated French style in *Faust* is the best grand-opera performance on the disc. The Cherry Duet from *L'amico Fritz* is phrased far more stylishly than it needs to be. Maybe the comedy in *L'elisir d'amore* is a tad heavy-handed. Like even the most seasoned bohemians, their climactic note in 'O soave fanciulla' feels a bit squeezed. But with

minimal shift in vocal technique, they sing Broadway with much self-possession and excellent English – not always the case with American singers by any means. Basically irresistible. **David Patrick Stearns**

'Pace mio Dio'

Catalani La Wally – Ebben? Ne andrò lontana **Cilea**
 Adriana Lecouvreur – Io son l'umile ancella
Leoncavallo Pagliacci – Qual fiamma avea nel
 guardo!...Hui! Stridono lassù **Puccini** Gianni
 Schicchi – O mio babbino caro. Madama Butterfly
 – Un bel dì vedremo. La rondine – Chi il bel sogno
 di Doretta. Tosca – Vissi d'arte. Turandot – Tu che
 di gel sei cinta **Verdi** La forza del destino – Pace,
 pace mio Dio. La traviata – Addio del passato;
 Sempre libera. Il trovatore – D'amor sull'ali rosee;
 Tacea la notte
Dinara Alieva *sop* **Czech National**
Symphony Orchestra / Marcello Rota
 Delos © DE3462 (61' • DDD)



From the quality of her voice, one would guess that the soprano Dinara Alieva came

from Spain or Italy, but in fact she was brought up and educated in Azerbaijan. There is nothing Slavonic-sounding in her firm, creamy voice and certainly no Slavonic wobble, making her a perfect candidate for this formidable sequence of favourite soprano arias.

She opens with Violetta's two big solos from *La traviata*. Her coloratura in the cabaletta 'Sempre libera' is flawless, while in the two stanzas of 'Addio del passato' she offers subtle contrasts. Butterfly's 'Un bel dì' in the first of her Puccini items rises to a thrilling climax at the end, with no roughness in the voice even under pressure. 'O mio babbino caro' from *Gianni Schicchi* is similarly nuanced, while the items by Cilea, Catalani and Leoncavallo are also shaded beautifully in tone and dynamic. She ends the recital with more Verdi, if anything even more taxing. She produces perfect trills in the cabaletta of 'Tacea la notte' from *Il trovatore* and rises superbly to the challenge of the big aria for the heroine in *La forza del destino*, 'Pace, pace mio Dio'.

What is remarkable about all of Alieva's singing is her depth of feeling, conveyed without exaggeration, from the heart. It is not surprising that such divas as Montserrat Caballé and Teresa Berganza speak of Alieva with such warmth. This really is an exceptional soprano recital which should bring the name of Dinara Alieva to new prominence.

Edward Greenfield

REPLAY

Rob Cowan's monthly survey of historic reissues and archive recordings

Busch at his best

Guild and Pristine produce collections that celebrate the artistry of Adolf Busch

When assessing the value of important reissues, the music and its performers are paramount. But in the case of three recent four-disc sets from Archiv's 'Archive' series that Jonathan Freeman-Attwood reviews in the Reissues section (see page 86) I feel it only fair to mention product manager David Butchart: these are surely among the best planned, most attractively produced 'historic' collections of recent years.

My own favourite among the three is the collection devoted to August Wenzinger and his Schola Cantorum Basiliensis, which is valuable above all

'It catches all four players at the height of their powers in sound that is rather better than you might expect'

for the innate musicality of the solo playing. As it happens, Wenzinger studied with Paul Grümmer, who at the time (1927) was cellist of the **Busch Quartet**. Happily, Guild has just reissued the series of acoustically recorded discs that the quartet made in 1922, not long after it was formed, which catches all four players at the height of their powers in sound that, although primitive, is rather better than you might expect.

One work is played complete: an 'Op 3 No 5', long thought to have been composed by Haydn but which is in fact by Roman Hofstetter and includes an *Andante cantabile* second movement that was for many years billed simply as 'Haydn's Serenade'. Here Busch glides atop

his colleagues with the most seductive, warmly drawn tone, a master of phrase-shaping, as always.

And yet for me the set's principal draw is in the various solos that Busch recorded at around the same time with Bruno Seidler-Winkler at the piano, valuable in that we otherwise have nothing of Busch in such sweetmeats as Dvořák's *Humoresque* (arr Wilhelmj), *Slavonic Dances* Nos 3 and 8 and *Romantic Piece* No 1 (mistakenly billed as No 4), Porpora's *Aria* in E, Gossec's *Gavotte* from *Rosine*, various Brahms *Hungarian Dances*, a Tartini *Adagio*, Kreisler's *Tartini Variations* and so on. These and numerous other tracks show Busch to have been as capable of charm as he was of profound interpretation.

That latter side of his personality is amply illustrated by his electrically recorded Berlin Bach recordings, including the G major Sonata, BWV1021, with Rudolf Serkin and the whole of the D minor solo Partita with alternative takes for the Sarabanda and Gigue, the former illustrating precisely why Busch was prized as one of the greatest musicians of his generation.

Quartets-wise, the Busch's fame rests largely on the magnificent recordings of the 'late' Beethoven quartets that they made in 1930s and '40s. One maddening omission was a quartet version of the *Grosse Fuge* (Op 130's rightful finale), though Busch's rigorously prepared recording with his own Chamber Players makes partial amends. Numerous CD labels have offered us subtle transfer variations on the Busch Beethoven legacy – Biddulph, EMI and Pearl among them – and Pristine Audio's

slightly 'aired' option will appeal to listeners who prefer a modest concert hall acoustic to the clearly focused but rather claustrophobic feel of the shellac originals. In the case of Op 132, just occasionally Hermann Busch's cello picks up a little too much ambience, but elsewhere the sound is lively and credibly realistic, with next to no surface noise.

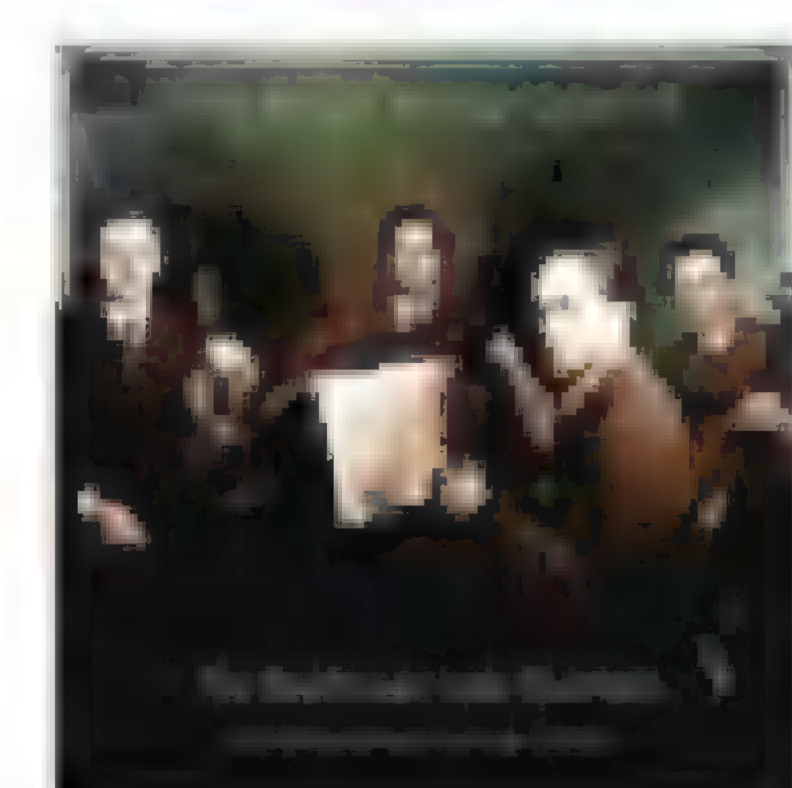
Op 131, perhaps the finest performance of the set (maybe the work's greatest recording of all time), is wholly successful sound-wise, with a beautifully judged transition from the (broadly paced) first movement to the second. Op 130 and Op 59 No 1 (the one 'non-late' quartet included, though the Busch also recorded Op 18 No 1, Op 59 No 2 and Op 95) were made in America in the early 1940s and sound virtually as good as tape recordings, Op 130's *Cavatina*, like the slow movements of Op 132 and Op 135, serving as uplifting interpretative models for any quartets active now or in the future.

These truly are great recordings of the last century and I would be very surprised if anything that appears this side of the centennial divide were to match them. **G**

THE RECORDINGS



Various Cpsrs Berlin
Recordings 1921-29 **Busch**
Guild **ⓑ** **Ⓢ** GHCD2406/7



Beethoven Late String Quartets
Busch Quartet
Pristine **Ⓢ** **Ⓢ** PACM093



Adolf Busch, a violinist as capable of charm as he was of profound interpretation

Földes plays Bartók

Some years ago DG released a single 'Dokumente' CD of highlights from their award-winning four-LP collection of Bartók piano works played by **Andor Földes**, recorded 1954-55. Now Eloquence has taken the long-dreamt-of initiative of reissuing the set *in toto*, which means CD premieres of some magnificent performances. True, György Sándor (like Földes, a Bartók pupil) and Zoltán Kocsis (a Bartók scholar) followed on with superb sets of their own, both rather more complete than the one Földes offers here, but a number of these performances remain more or less unmatched.

The *Improvisations on Hungarian Peasant Songs* and *Three Rondos on Hungarian Folk Tunes* are among Bartók's piano masterpieces, and Földes's combination of iron-fisted rhythmic projection and poetically turned, sculpted phrasing focuses both works with total conviction. The *Three Burlesques* and *Two Elegies* offer contrasting aspects of Bartók's multifaceted personality and there are the various suites of short pieces, the *15 Hungarian Peasant Songs*, *Romanian Christmas Carols*, *Nine Little Piano Pieces*, *Ten Easy Pieces*, pieces from *For Children* and the *Mikrokosmos* selections, some of which were on the original single CD.

A pity that Földes never recorded the wonderful 14 Bagatelles (at least not as part of this particular venture) – maybe lack of space on the LPs was the problem – but sample either *Out of Doors* or the Sonata and you'll soon realise why these recordings have always won such extravagant plaudits. A fine companion CD of Földes playing Kodály is also available (480 7099) and

let's hope Eloquence goes on to afford us local CD access of sonatas by Copland and Stravinsky, as well as Barber's *Excursions*.

THE RECORDING



Bartók Piano Works
Andor Földes *pf*
DG Eloquence © ④ 480 7100

The young McCormack

It's not often that we can trace the development of a great recording artist from raw but promising immaturity to the first flush of mature youth but in the case of the great tenor **John McCormack**, and thanks to the enterprise of Jeremy Meehan and the dazzling technical skills of transfer engineer Ward Marston, we can now do just that. McCormack's Odeon recordings from 1906 to 1909 bear witness to a marked curve of artistic development, heading securely towards the glorious vocal declamations and expressive poise that characterise the best of the singer's recordings for Victor and HMV.

Having heard other transfers of these Odeons, I placed the first disc in my CD tray with some trepidation. Even from the initial track, 'A nation once again' (September 1906), I could hardly believe my ears: the clarity of the voice, even of the accompanying band, defies belief. I've heard McCormack records from 10 or more years later that don't sound half as good. And while it would be idle to pretend that the version of 'Kathleen Mavourneen' begins to compare with the recording McCormack made in the late 1920s with Edwin Schneider (one of his greatest),

the 1908 versions of 'I hear you calling me' and the 1909 version of 'My dark Rosaleen', not to mention selected operatic excerpts, are already pretty impressive. With comprehensive documentation and a selection of equally well-transferred cylinder recordings, this must be counted as one of the major historic CD releases of the last decade.

THE RECORDING



John McCormack: A Star Ascending - Odeon Recordings 1906-09'
Marston © ④ 54005-2
marstonrecords.com

Beecham's Mozart

A rather different manner of contrast between a relatively young musician and his older self is afforded by Pristine Audio, which has coupled a triple-bill of Mozart symphonies (Nos 31, 35 and 36) recorded in the early 1950s by the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra under **Sir Thomas Beecham** with a quartet of Mozart recordings (*Magic Flute* and *Figaro* overtures, *Figaro* Sarabande and K131's Minuet and Trio) performed by Beecham's Symphony Orchestra between 1915 and 1917.

To be truthful, all you can tell about the acoustic recordings is that they're old (prominent string *portamentos* abound) and that the playing is fairly spirited. On the other hand, I've always loved Beecham's mono American Columbia Mozart symphony recordings (out here, for a while, on Sony CDs), the *Paris* especially, with its varied dynamics, punchy accents and expressive phrasing.

When it comes to underlining musical arguments, Beecham doesn't miss a trick (the big key-change at the onset of the first movement's development section, for example), and the playing of the Royal Philharmonic is full of gusto. Andrew Rose has subtly 'aired' the sound, which has a strong bass-line.

I'm optimistically assuming that Symphonies Nos 40 and 41 (surely Beecham's finest *Jupiter*) are already in the pipeline. Just for the record, next in line is a CD of Symphonies Nos 38, 39 and Divertimento No 2 (PASC413).

THE RECORDING



Mozart Symphonies, Vol 1
RPO; Beecham SO /
Thomas Beecham
Pristine Audio © PASC409

Books



Peter Dickinson reads a revealing biography of Constant Lambert:

'Lambert has not had a fair deal: this magisterial book is the best possible case for a revival'



Jeremy Nicholas reviews the memoirs of a great singer:

'Jessye Norman comes across as a thoughtful and intelligent woman – her smile can light up a room'

Constant Lambert

Beyond the Rio Grande

By Stephen Lloyd

Boydell Press, HB, 622pp, £45

ISBN 978-1-84383-898-2



Perhaps Lambert's greatest mistake was to quarrel with the great impresario Serge Diaghilev, whose Ballets Russes was so influential in all the arts. In 1925 Lambert, a mere 20-year-old student at the Royal College of Music, played his ballet score *Adam and Eve* to Diaghilev. The great man liked it but changed the title to *Romeo and Juliet*. This upset Lambert but he was furious when he went to Monte Carlo for rehearsals and found that, instead of using the English painter Christopher Wood, Diaghilev had commissioned sets from Max Ernst and Joan Miró, surrealists whom Lambert considered 'incompetent charlatans'. Diaghilev made changes in Nijinska's choreography and also made a cut in the music. Lambert had to be restrained from removing the parts from the stands. If only he had gone along with these adjustments, Diaghilev could have done as much for Lambert as he did for Stravinsky in the run-up to *The Firebird*.

Romeo and Juliet is a stunning piece of English neo-classicism, as vital and brittle as Stravinsky's *Pulcinella*. Then, in 1926, Nijinska choreographed *Pomona*, which was premiered in Buenos Aires (fine recordings of both ballets under John Lanchbery – Chandos, 4/01). Lambert's third success came outside the theatre and dwarfed all the rest: *The Rio Grande*, premiered early in 1928. He was intoxicated by the music of African Americans and his immersion in jazz and blues was also the driving force behind his *Elegiac Blues*, Piano Sonata and Concerto for piano and nine instruments. But he also had a relaxed lyricism, as in the *Eight Poems of Li-Po* and *Summer's Last Will and Testament*, often claimed as his masterpiece (superb recording plus *The*

Rio Grande under David Lloyd Jones – Hyperion, 6/92).

Lambert's background of poor health makes for grim reading. Deaf in one ear, he walked with a limp and probably had undiagnosed diabetes. With a largely absent father, his family was not supportive, and he was always short of cash. Before, during and after the war he was conductor and musical director of the Vic Wells Ballet, touring provincial cities in appalling conditions, and playing for rehearsals and performances on whatever piano was available. His health suffered again at a time when he was also much in demand as a conductor for the leading orchestras and the BBC – and he died at 45.

Lambert promoted Russian, French, and English composers such as Purcell and Boyce, as well as his friends Lord Berners and Alan Rawsthorne. His journalism could be pugnacious and his book *Music Ho!* (1934) is a landmark encapsulating its era. He narrated *Façade* from its earliest days with great success.

Stephen Lloyd did not have to start from scratch. Richard Shead's *Constant Lambert* (Simon: 1973), with a memoir from the novelist Anthony Powell, is an effective short study; then our previous poet laureate, Andrew Motion, wrote *The Lamberts: George, Constant and Kit* (Chatto: 1986), a stylish triple biography. Lambert gained further profile from Giles Easterbrook as publisher and arranger. But Lloyd has traced unpublished memoirs which have added depth to his more extensive portrait. The general reader may quail at full details of Lambert's programmes and travels but the book as a whole provides almost everything that can be known about Lambert, including his long hushed-up affair with Margot Fonteyn. There are 150 pages of appendices, all packed with valuable information. Lambert was not prolific but the best of his output wears astonishingly well. He has not had a fair deal: this magisterial book is the best possible case for a Lambert revival. No Lambert enthusiast should miss it. **Peter Dickinson**

Jessye Norman

Stand Up Straight and Sing! – A Memoir

Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, HB, 336pp, £20

ISBN 978-0-544-00340-8



Jessye Norman was born in Augusta, Georgia, in 1945, into a class that was, to America's eternal shame, subject to the Jim Crow laws that existed until 1965. A proud African American, she was keenly aware from an early age of the social and economic disadvantages to which her race was subject. Much of this memoir is concerned with racial discrimination – how it affected her and her family – and the singer's involvement with the Civil Rights movement. It was, paradoxically, her African American heritage that instilled in her the need to work and study diligently, and which introduced her to the church. 'The training ground of my community was as crucial to my performance life as to my spiritual journey. Music has always been an essential part of the African American worship service.'

Her chosen career path was a brave choice. Few African Americans had succeeded as opera singers. Norman's great hero Marian Anderson (whom she met and befriended) was not allowed to sing at the Met until 1955. Norman herself did not make her debut there until 1983, having spent much of the previous 15 years carving out a spectacular career in Europe, where racial stereotyping was not such a hindrance. With her extraordinary range from contralto to dramatic soprano, she became one of the finest recitalists and operatic singers of her generation, noted for the breadth of her repertoire, her linguistic versatility, assiduous preparation and attention to detail.

I'm not entirely sure at whom this book is aimed. Family? Friends? Fans? At times it reads like a life guide for



Power triangle: Jessye Norman (centre) backstage with the poet Sonia Sanchez (left) and the activist and journalist Gloria Steinem (right)

young musicians (it contains much valuable advice), at others a heartfelt litany of thanks to all those who were most influential in her development as an artist and human being. Of the singer's private life we learn precisely nothing. 'It is private,' is the blunt explanation. 'It is personal. May it ever be so.' There again, parts of the memoir seem to be a self-congratulatory celebration of the author's achievements, a record of the many important national events at which she has sung, and of the famous people at whose invitation she has performed. 'I am the recipient of more than 30 honorary doctorate degrees from a number of colleges, universities, and conservatories around the world,' we read. She sits next to the Duke of Edinburgh ('a marvellous luncheon companion') at a degree ceremony and was 'quite amused when His Highness [*sic*] proceeded to advise me as to which route I should have the driver take from Cambridge to Heathrow Airport in order to join the M25, which was all the rage among drivers, who believed that this new motorway would save travel

time in this southern part of Britain.' The conversation, we are assured, 'certainly ranks high in my memories of honorary-degree experiences.'

An old friend of mine who knew the singer well in the 1990s assures me that Jessye Norman is a sweetheart. She comes across in these pages as a thoughtful and intelligent woman whose contribution to children's charities and music in general has been immense. Her smile can light up a room. But the succession of anecdotes recording her triumphant put-downs of people who have upset or offended her over the years does little to dilute the impression of a petty, imperious prima donna whom you cross at your peril, one gained by the libel case she brought against *Classic CD* in the 1990s, no mention of which is made in the book. In an extremely complimentary profile of the singer, the magazine related a story of how the statuesque Miss Norman, on her way to a concert, became trapped in swing doors. Someone advised her to turn sideways to release herself, to which came the ringing response: 'Honey, I ain't

got no sideways.' Having failed to win damages in New York, she tried and failed again in London. Not satisfied with that, in 1997 she took her case to the Court of Appeal – and lost again.

She is clearly not enamoured of music journalists: 'One does not wish to give the impression of favouritism by social interaction with critics, or to present one's self as being open to their ideas or influence.' That's me off the 70th-birthday invitations for next year. But if you do find yourself socially interacting with La Norman don't, whatever you do, ask her to sing – especially if you are 'outside of the arts'. She will first ask you your profession. 'When I hear the person's response, I ask if he or she intends to "perform dentistry that evening" or "teach a class on Chaucer".' People are always surprised when they are reminded that we performers are really working on those stages.' Of course, that is true. But shortly before writing this review, I was watching a centenary tribute to another great singer, Kathleen Ferrier. How different she was to Jessye Norman. How very different. **Jeremy Nicholas**

Classics RECONSIDERED



Harriet Smith and Rob Cowan

compare the finer details of Artur Schnabel's pioneering 1932 recording of Beethoven's Piano Sonata No 32, part of the first complete recorded survey of the piano sonatas



Beethoven

Piano Sonata No 32, Op 111

Artur Schnabel *pf*

EMI © ® 763765-2 (10h 5' • ADD)

To most of his listeners Schnabel seems one of the very first pianists of our times. His perfection of touch and his absolute control of dynamics are well known; not so often emphasised are the inimitable 'singing' quality of his tone, and the almost orchestral richness and variety which he brings forth from the piano. To this technical mastery Schnabel adds and fuses what is all too rare a quality:

an intensely intelligent (not merely 'intellectual') mind.

From the almost hundred-and-a-quarter records Schnabel has made, one can do no more than mention a few of the most outstanding. The very first sets issued were among the best from the point of view of recording, and among the most impressive pianistically; the records of the Beethoven Sonata in C minor, Op 111, were at the time much the finest playing and recording thus far issued, and even now remain among the foremost piano records of the world. **Robert A Hall** (8/37)

Schnabel is indubitably the master of the genuinely slow slow movement. Forget the story about his playing of the opening chord of the slow movement of Beethoven's C minor Concerto and Schoenberg's despairing cry 'I can't count any longer!'; and concentrate instead on the way, from the earliest sonatas to the final movement of Op 111, that he is able to reconcile a calm and concentrated slowness with a breathing pulse and stirring inner life that is beyond the wit of most latter-day imitators. No one now distils these imaginative essences quite as Schnabel did. **Richard Osborne** (7/91)

Harriet Smith I was struck reading Schnabel's book where he talks about his repeated refusals to go into the recording studio and that one of the chief reasons was because he 'did not like the idea of having no control over the behaviour of the people who listened to music which I performed – not knowing how they would be dressed, what else they would be doing at the same time, how much they would listen'.

That in itself is striking enough (and you could argue that if artists were that sensitive today then no one would record anything), but even more telling is when he goes on to say 'I felt that recordings are against the very nature of performance, for the nature of performance is to happen but once, to be absolutely ephemeral and unrepeatable'. What I find so fascinating about Schnabel's Beethoven – and Op 111 is a prime example, as are his *Diabellis* – is that these recordings somehow capture something ephemeral yet consistently and eternally fresh. It really does sound so spontaneous yet so assured.

Rob Cowan This is fascinating, Harriet, because if there is one quality about Schnabel's pre-war Op 111 that I value

above all else (less so his 1942 remake for RCA), it's that overwhelming sense that he is ushering us into Beethoven's world without a care for anything other than the spirit of the music. Maybe his thoughts skated across such issues as dress codes or levels of dedicated listening but it seems to me that once he applied his hands to the keyboard his interpretative skills took the reins of this most devastating of Beethoven's sonatas, and nothing else mattered.

The first time I heard him play those humbling first chords and defiant upward flourish I was walking across Hampstead Heath listening to a BBC broadcast of the recording on a low-quality miniature transistor radio. In spite of the tinny sound, Schnabel's rhetorical timing and the sheer force of his approach seemed to signal some sort of mighty apocalypse. Excellent Op 111s snuggle alongside Schnabel's in my collection (Solomon, Pollini, Kempff, Gulda, Arrau) and yet they don't move me in quite the same way. It's difficult to believe that this 1932 Op 111 was achieved in anything less than a single take, which would have been well-nigh impossible given the way studio-recorded 78s were usually made.

HS I came to Schnabel the other way round: only discovering him after people like Solomon (who I love and yet who doesn't get the same degree of pathos in the introduction as Schnabel – the effect is more contained, less vehement, perhaps less dangerous) and Backhaus (who I'm afraid rather underwhelmed me). You sense with Schnabel that he's just pouring himself into this work – or as you say, Rob – ushering us in to Beethoven's extraordinarily private world. And this was – I think – the first-ever recording of this piece: talk about setting the bench high!

It's such a live experience even more than 80 years on. The way that rumbling trill that takes us into the *Allegro* proper sounds so dangerous. And his much talked-about *rubato* doesn't feel like a conscious act: the effect is so natural so that even where he speeds up inadvertently you're carried along by his vision, just as you are when you hear Rachmaninov or Cortot at the keyboard.

The point you make about recording on 78s is really food for thought: it does sound absolutely seamless. In fact every time I re-listen to it, I find it very jarring to do



Artur Schnabel in his later years, pictured here at the Edinburgh International Festival. He recorded the Beethoven piano sonatas between 1932 and 1938

anything other than play it all the way through. There's something very special about Schnabel's quiet playing too: it's not just a matter of dynamics, it's as if he's retreated far, far into himself, if that makes sense.

RC That retreat is at its most noble at the beginning of the Arietta, where the spacing of chords is so perfectly judged. I was

planning a teaching project not long ago, using that opening as a key example of how to distend musical paragraphs without having them sag halfway. By coincidence (and by accident) I sampled the 1942 recording and thought 'this isn't quite as I remembered it; it's similar but the binding has come loose'. I was right. Later episodes in the same movement (the heavily syncopated 'Beethoven boogies' variation,

for example) sound utterly off-the-wall, as if Beethoven had flung himself way into the future, a prophet of both doom and modern dance. This was an essential element of his late style, shrinking time so that 'classical and 'modern' become as one. This is also Schnabel the modernist composer speaking, using his intuition to probe beneath the surface of music that others merely play with, albeit respectfully. Odd gulped phrases or stumbles suggest impatience, not carelessness.

HS The line between sagacity and saggiess is indeed a very thin one, Rob! It is almost defying the nature of physics that Schnabel can sustain the line of the Arietta at that speed – and not lose the *cantabile* aspect of Beethoven's marking or, equally, the *semplice*. A wonderful example of what he talked about as using extremes of tempo to allow the music to develop a certain majestic quiet. Yet how many pianists today (or even then) are capable of doing that? Of taking the sorts of risks that on paper sound like a terrible idea? Most just end up sounding self-conscious, as if they're trying too hard to be 'profound'.

I think the point you make about Schnabel the composer is absolutely spot-on: he understands form from the inside, from making it as well as interpreting it. And he conveys the violent extremes between the first movement, where Beethoven combines the most dynamic of techniques – ie sonata form and fugue – and this variation-form Arietta, which is by its nature (even here!) more static tonally. The way Schnabel progresses from that theme to the increasingly frenetic and frankly bonkers variations is completely beyond words.

But another thing that really strikes me about his performance is the enormous clarity of his playing. So the boogie variation, even though pretty fast, has a lucidity where many pianists sound merely muddy in the left hand. And then again the way that he retreats in the next variation right down to *pp*: it's so unerring, so compelling.

RC And there's the very end, sailing us into eternity on a sea of trills. Schnabel's Op 111 sends me off pondering Eliot's great musically titled poem *Four Quartets*: 'Out at sea the dawn wind / Wrinkles and slides. I am here / Or there, or elsewhere. In my beginning.' Eliot makes magic with time, as does Beethoven, while Schnabel, the ultimate when it comes to profound keyboard poetry, binds both in an unforgettable way. **G**

THE SPECIALIST'S GUIDE TO...

Music for viola

Far from playing second fiddle to the violin, the viola has, in the past century, become a respected solo instrument in its own right. **Duncan Druce** introduces his top 10 showpieces for the instrument

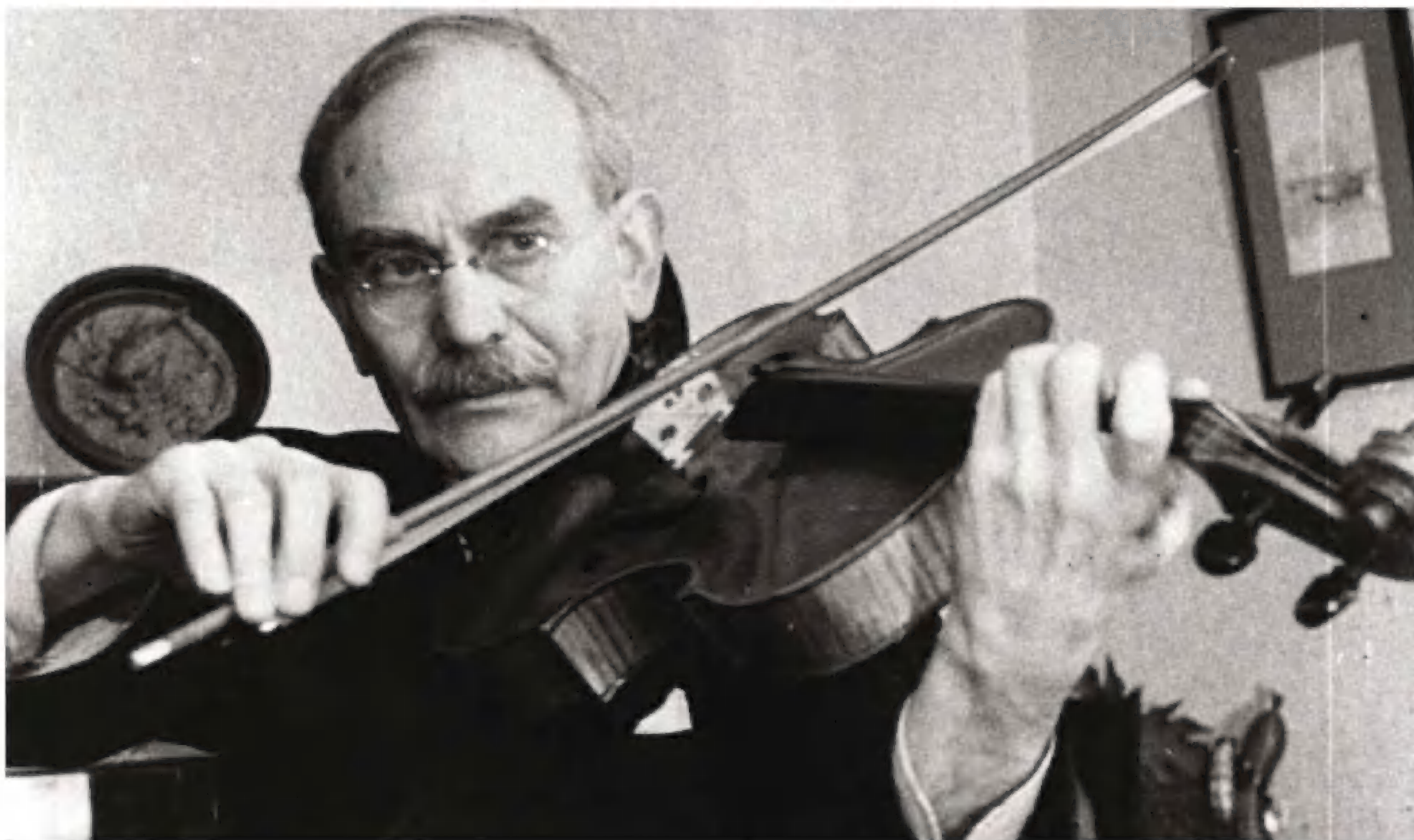
The viola possesses a history as long and distinguished as that of its fellow violin family members. An essential part of the string consort music of the 16th and 17th centuries, it then took its place in the orchestra and in many of the most popular forms of chamber music. But whereas violinists and cellists can choose from many fine concertos and sonatas, viola players have far fewer solo options. Why should this be so? The lack is sometimes traced to a low standard of viola playing (hence the ubiquitous 'viola jokes'), but the truth is surely rather different: until comparatively recent times, viola parts were played by violinists, who swapped

instruments as occasion demanded, preferring the more brilliant violin for solo performance. Despite this, there is a small pre-1900 repertoire of outstanding viola works, including three items on the list I've included here.

The 20th century saw the rise of specialist viola players, demanding original solo music. One of the most important pioneers was Lionel Tertis, commemorated in this selection. Another was Paul Hindemith, who himself made several substantial contributions to the viola literature; I've not included any of them, however – despite the idiomatic writing and fine craftsmanship, I find them strangely unappealing. Others will disagree.

These 10 works are all specifically designed for the viola – solo, and with piano or orchestra. This means that the two Brahms sonatas, originally written for the clarinet, are left out, as well as some familiar music in which the viola is prominent, such as Bach's *Brandenburg Concerto* No 6 and Mozart's *Sinfonia concertante*, K364. Likewise, Berlioz's *Harold in Italy* must surely be classed as an essentially orchestral work, albeit with an important solo part.

Nowadays there is a plethora of viola virtuosos, especially among the younger generation. I've tried to include as many as possible of these fine artists, and to give a flavour of what has now become a rich and varied repertoire. **G**



Lionel Tertis: a pioneer of viola music in the 20th century whose recording of Bax's Sonata features in this Specialist's Guide

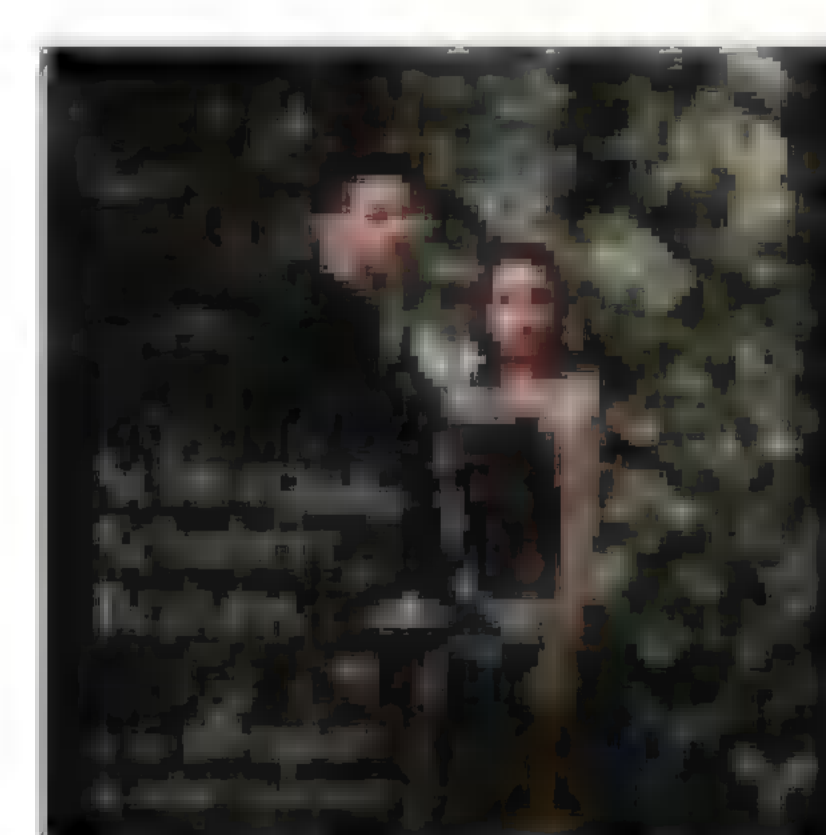
PHOTOGRAPHY: HAYWOOD MAGEE/GETTY IMAGES



10 Telemann
Viola Concerto in G
Peter Langgartner *va*
Cis Collegium Mozarteum
Salzburg / Jürgen Geise

Arte Nova © 74321 34028-2

It's no surprise that the versatile Telemann wrote a viola concerto when the instrument had virtually no solo repertoire. It's a modest piece, but beautifully proportioned, and the viola's distinctive voice is brought clearly to the fore. I've not found in the current catalogue a period performance I can wholeheartedly recommend; this recording is full of life, and if the slower movements are too forceful, Langgartner makes a very stylish soloist.



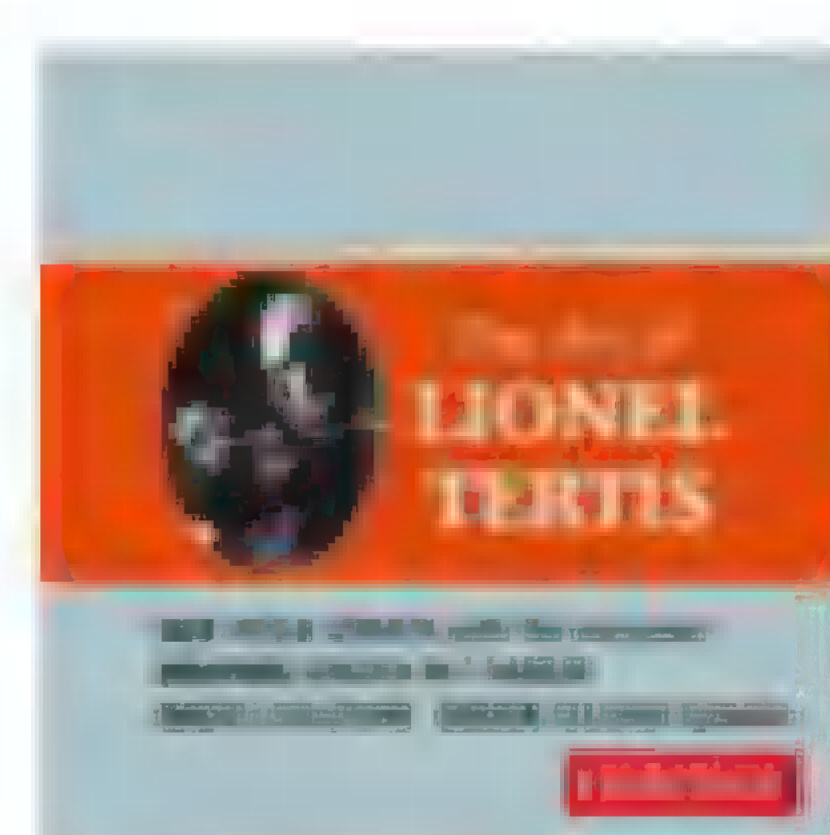
9 Schumann
Märchenbilder, Op 113
Lise Berthaud *va*
Adam Laloum *pf*
Aparté © APO69 (2/14)

This set of short pieces - 'Fairy-tale Pictures' - evokes varied fantastical events and scenes. The viola is used with great imagination to suggest in turn a melancholy meditation, a scenario of heroic endeavour, an agitated confrontation and a lullaby with slightly sinister undertones - this last memorably exploiting the unique sound of the viola's lowest string. This splendid recording brings out all the little details that make Schumann's music so original and evocative.



8 Joachim
Variations, Op 10
Zaslav Duo
Music & Arts © ② MACD1087

It's difficult to understand why this magnificent work is not better known. Based on a haunting original theme, the music later acquires added poignancy with the introduction of Hungarian idioms. The variations are impressively structured, taking the listener on a journey of profound contrasts. It's a shame that this performance by the Zaslav Duo (Bernard and Naomi Zaslav) omits so many repeats; otherwise, it's a fine interpretation, full of romantic warmth and, in places, grandeur.



7 Bax
Viola Sonata
Lionel Tertis *va* Arnold Bax *pf*
Heritage © HTGCD 261 (7/81st)
Most of Lionel Tertis's

recordings are of short pieces or transcriptions for viola, so this 1929 recording is especially valuable. Bax's Viola Sonata, dedicated to Tertis, is a substantial and remarkable work and, with the composer himself (a fine pianist) as accompanist, this performance has complete authenticity. Tertis's *portamenti* and rhythmic style may belong to a vanished age, but his command of the instrument and his remarkable expressive range cannot be missed.



6 Walton
Viola Concerto
Lawrence Power *va*
BBC Scottish Symphony
Orchestra / Ilan Volkov

Hyperion © CDA67587 (7/07)

Perhaps the first work to show Walton's full range as a composer, the Viola Concerto is also a landmark in the history of viola music - a large-scale symphonic concerto fully displaying the solo instrument's capabilities. Lawrence Power is a commanding soloist, eagerly embracing the work's virtuosity and equally at home with the melancholy musings of the opening and the *Scherzo*'s jazzy rhythms.



5 Britten
Lachrymae, Op 48a
Maxim Rysanov *va*
BBC Symphony Orchestra /
Edward Gardner

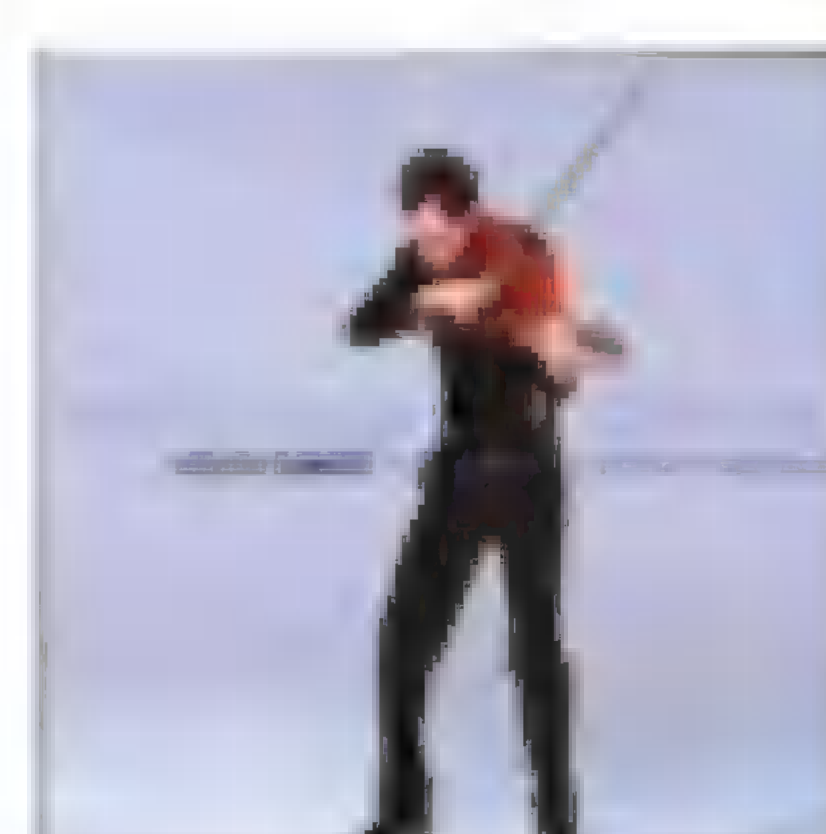
Chandos © CHAN10671 (7/11)

Subtitled 'Reflections on a Song of John Dowland', *Lachrymae* was originally written in 1950 for viola and piano. Britten recast the piano part for string orchestra in 1976 and this is the version heard here - one that is wonderfully effective, especially near the end when the Dowland song steals in. This finely balanced performance sustains the sombre mood beautifully, with Rysanov a sensitive and, when called for, powerful soloist.



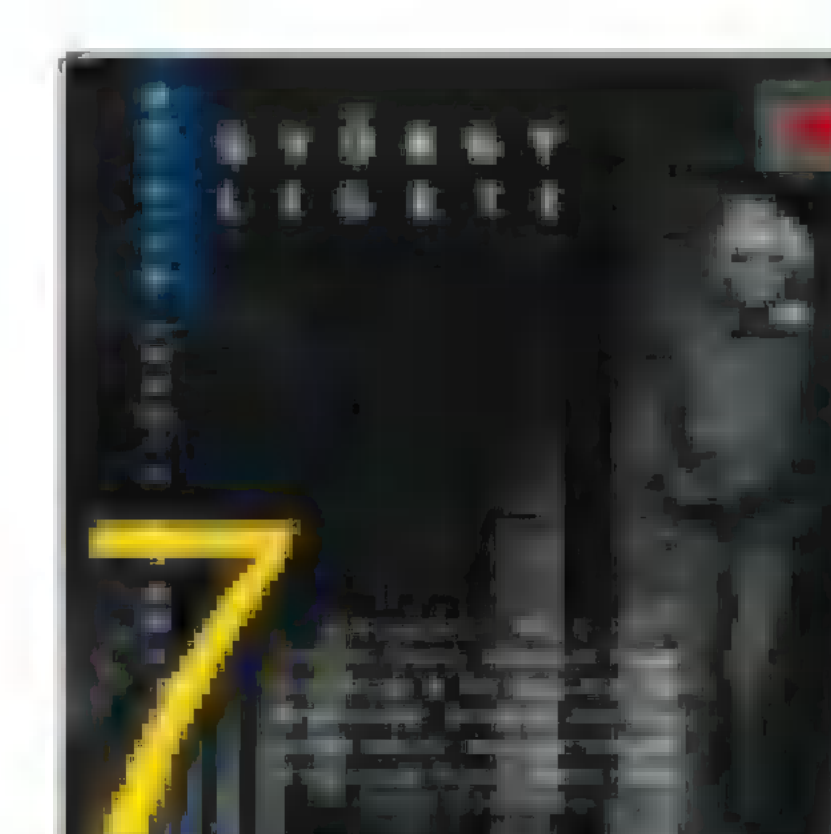
4 Berio
Sequenza VI
Christophe Desjardins *va*
Aeon © ② AECD0981

The viola *Sequenza*, which takes the instrument into uncharted territory, exploits extreme techniques - there's a parallel with Paganini's writing for the violin - to create an impression of drama and astonishment. And, as with Paganini, we feel there may be something diabolical afoot. Desjardins gives a fantastic performance, playing the ubiquitous multiple-stop *tremolandi* with compelling intensity, and managing the gradual decline from desperate activity to emptiness with supreme skill.



3 Shostakovich
Viola Sonata
Antoine Tamestit *va*
Markus Hadulla *pf*
Ambrosie © AM168

Shostakovich described his last work as 'bright, light and clear'. Certainly the textures are clear (spare, even), but the darkness and pain typical of his late period are in evidence, too. The slow finale, with its echoes of Beethoven's *Moonlight* Sonata, is powerfully affecting. Tamestit and Hadulla expose the character of each movement with impressive precision; their restraint in the long sections of quiet music puts into sharp relief the occasional passionate outbursts.



2 Ligeti
Solo Viola Sonata
Tabea Zimmermann *va*
Sony Classical ©
SK62309 (4/98)

Like Berio's *Sequenza* VI, Ligeti's Solo Sonata stretches the viola's capabilities and expressive range, but embraces a more varied character. The even-numbered movements inhabit the fantastical world of his piano études. There have been several good recordings, none finer than that by Zimmermann, whose playing inspired the work. If this proves difficult to find, a good alternative is a disc featuring her student Antoine Tamestit (Ambrosie AM111, 8/07).



1 Bartók Viola Concerto

Kim Kashkashian *va* Netherlands Radio Chamber Orchestra / Peter Eötvös
ECM New Series © 465 4202 (7/00)

Composed in the final weeks of his life, Bartók's Viola Concerto was left in draft form. But though there is some uncertainty about the exact text, the piece is complete in its essentials and fully the equal of the great concertos he wrote for piano and violin. This performance has a special magic, with the *Adagio religioso* especially plangent and moving. Kashkashian has a remarkable range of

expression, from pure string tone to Gypsy vehemence, and the orchestra matches her - the smiling pastoral episodes sounding as strongly characterised as the dark, fierce ones.



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A 'passion' for our time

A Child of Our Time, premiered in 1944, was Tippett's reaction to tragic events that changed the course of world history. **Geraint Lewis** traces the genesis of this modern classic and follows its progress on disc

Seventy-five years ago on September 4, 1939 (the day after the Second World War was declared), Michael Tippett sat at the outsized piano which dwarfed everything else in the living room of his tiny cottage in Oxted, Surrey, and started writing a large-scale work for solo voices, chorus and orchestra which would then take nearly two years to complete. Having done so, he put it in a bottom drawer and turned to chamber music instead, beginning the Second String Quartet. There were several unusual things about Tippett and *A Child of Our Time* (as he'd entitled his oratorio). No commission, no publisher, no money and no performance in mind. No librettist either: but thereby hangs another tale!

Although born in London on January 2, 1905, Tippett grew up in a 16th-century farmhouse deep in the Suffolk countryside not far from Stowmarket, in a household rich in intellectual stimulation though less notable for its musical advantages. The two Tippett brothers did have piano lessons, their mother sang to them at home, and by the age of nine the younger boy, Michael, was already aware that he wanted to be a composer. This is not meant to be a biographical sketch so much as to underline the contingent significance of war in Tippett's life. The event which triggered in him that undefinable urge to compose was the seemingly happy sound of young soldiers singing the new hit *It's a Long Way to Tipperary* as they marched past Rosemary Cottage's garden-lane in August 1914 to fight in the Great War: the child was moved by the singing and wanted to replicate its effect in himself. The memory remained with Tippett until his dying day, but it became forever clouded by the shocking realisation in 1923 of what had actually happened to so many of those

blithe-hearted, innocent boys. In a London cinema during the first term of his studies at the Royal College of Music, he cheerfully went to see Rudolph Valentino in *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse* – during which, he remembered, Beethoven's 'doom-laden' *Coriolan* Overture sounded whenever the horsemen appeared on screen. But on seeing hundreds of little white crosses as graves and realising whose they were and what they meant, the 18-year-old burst into tears and fled the cinema. He was already embarked on the road towards *A Child of Our Time*.

SIGNIFICANCE OF SYMBIOSIS

A long compositional apprenticeship took a good 10 years to reach the first 'acknowledged' score (String Quartet No 1 in 1935), but this formative period also encompassed many related musical experiences (notably as the inspiring conductor of amateur choirs and orchestras at London's Morley College), all designed to feed his patient evolution as a composer. Just as significant was the whole rich panoply of life itself, which Tippett characteristically savoured to the full. He acknowledged that every seemingly unrelated activity was ultimately absorbed – often decades later – into his creative output. Learning German in order to read Goethe was deliberate, falling in love with painter Wilfred Franks was not. Both, however, had a profound impact on the composer's artistic development. Even the eventual crisis of his break-up with Franks in 1938 led to an intense practical engagement with the Jungian psychology he'd already absorbed in the abstract and which in consequence was to influence every aspect of his life's work. Political involvements, too, were frequently attached to significant others, always left-wing in nature but often channelled to

musical, and particularly to humanitarian and pacifist, ends.

Tippett travelled extensively in Germany in 1926 and 1929, so it was perhaps to be expected that the sudden deterioration of its moral politics after Hitler's electoral triumph of 1933 would have a particular effect on him. He would say later that he felt himself drawn 'by something of [his] own entrails' into this situation, both emotionally and intellectually, and then felt compelled to 'sing songs' for the Jewish people now being turned into refugees, outcasts and worse. The Munich crisis of September 30, 1938 convinced him that another catastrophic war was inevitable and found him involuntarily writing down a dark slow fugue subject which later emerged in the Second Quartet. But the immediate reverberations of the appalling Kristallnacht, which followed on November 9 as a direct result of the Paris shooting two days previously of a German official by a young Polish Jew, led to something quite different – the conscious formulation of a work for the concert hall in which the necessary elements of dramatic story-telling would combine with contemplation and reflection: in other words, a merging of Bach's Lutheran Passions with Handel's English oratorios and *Messiah* in particular. The scapegoat figures were there before him in the *Picture Post* report – the 17-year-old assassin Herschel Grynszpan in prison, his aunt and uncle at their Paris trial – along with all the visceral ingredients of an incipient tragedy whose aftermath was unfolding throughout Europe. All he needed now was someone to write the words for his embryonic music.

TEXTUAL MATTERS

TS Eliot would not have seemed an obvious choice for a virtually unknown composer



Tippett in 1945, at a rehearsal of *A Child of Our Time*



Michael Tippett (seated, centre) listens to a rehearsal of his oratorio *A Child of Our Time* at the Corn Exchange, Bedford, in March 1945

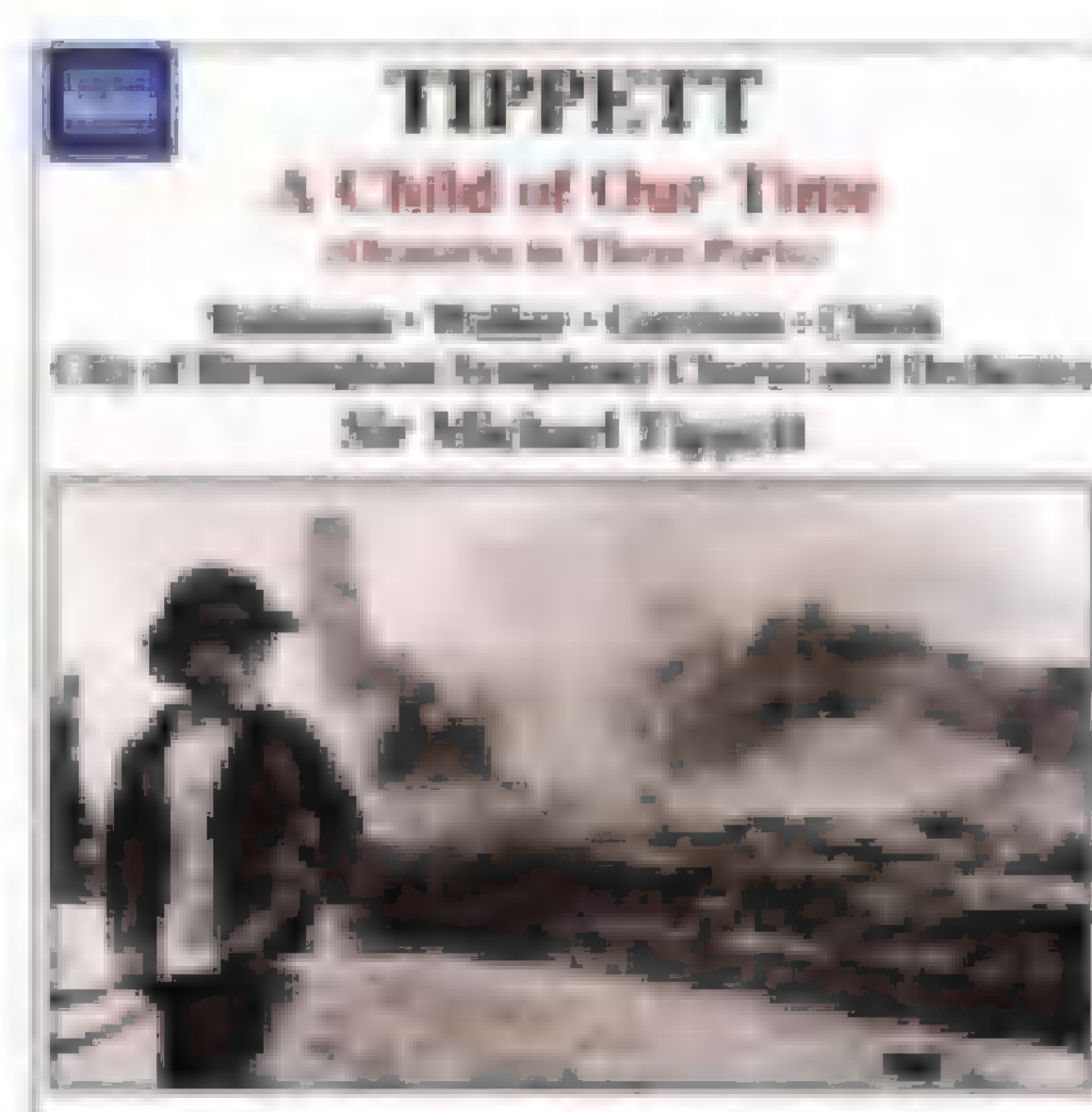
to approach, but Tippett had an uncanny knack of falling on his feet. He'd met Eliot by chance a couple of years before 1938, adopting him as an artistic father figure and sharing with him a borrowed family life at the Surrey home of Frank Morley, an American publisher whose six-year-old son, Oliver, Tippett was trying to teach. Morley and Eliot worked together at Faber and Faber in London. But it was WH Auden, ironically, who'd recommended Tippett to Morley as the ideal person to help his son, who, though exceptionally musical, was unable (or unwilling) to speak but who

loved to stand on his head as a surprise for adults during concert intervals! Eliot, on the other hand, was very willing to unbend verbally, so when the right time came Tippett asked if he'd consider writing a libretto for the oratorio he was planning. The affirmative response came with a typically strict request for 'homework' in the form of a clear structural design for every movement, along with explicit instructions as to content. In looking now at what Tippett presented to Eliot it is easy enough to see why he told him to finish the job himself and to 'keep the poets away'

from his libretti 'because they are going to do with the words what your music should do'. Fortified by their lengthy kitchen-table conversations Tippett polished his text accordingly, so that when the impending Second World War he'd long feared finally broke out he found the music 'welling up inside him' – and composition had to begin.

SPIRITUAL MATTERS

One question he'd inevitably pondered already was how to find a suitable modern equivalent of Bach's congregational chorales – well-known



HISTORIC CHOICE

CBSO / Sir Michael Tippett

Naxos ® 8 557570

Tippett was an instinctive conductor who could shape his scores and bring out the best from performers so that even if his interpretation should ideally have been captured a decade or two earlier this is still a testament to treasure for its honesty and vision.



LIVE CHOICE

BBC SO / Gennadi Rozhdestvensky

BBC Legends ® BBCM5013-2

As an expression of Jung's 'collective unconscious' the presence of an audience in this particular piece does make a tangible difference and the underrated Rozhdestvensky is caught on song here with some of the best solo singers at the height of their powers.



COLIN DAVIS CHOICE

LSO / Sir Colin Davis

LSO Live ® LSO0670

As Tippett's most ardent champion, Sir Colin may have taken a different, less emotional approach to this score than the composer himself, but in this live performance from just before the 10th anniversary of Tippett's death he's movingly passionate and eloquent.

tunes that could nevertheless be presented anew as moments of collective expression. It may now seem glib to say so, but only a composer of genius could have found his solution in 1938 by accidentally hearing a Spiritual being sung on the radio. By the time Tippett presented Eliot with his draft scenario he'd already positioned five suitable Spirituals as strategic pillars within the design, so that as he started on his own invention in September 1939 he was saturated not only in their words but also in their archetypal music. It is perhaps difficult for us today to recapture within ourselves that extraordinary frisson when the solo soprano's soaring high Gs seem to melt into the magical emergence of 'Steal away' in choir and orchestra. Oh, to have been there at London's Adelphi Theatre on March 19, 1944 when Walter Goehr (Alexander's father) conducted the premiere of *A Child of Our Time* with the LPO, Morley College Choir, the London Region Civil Defence Choir (yes!) and soloists including Peter Pears and Joan Cross (Britten helped to arrange the performance) – and it's too much to hope that a clandestine tape recording might still exist somewhere. The test of any good performance, nevertheless, is the ability to create afresh that shiver-down-the-spine of recognition as this first Spiritual unfolds itself around all involved in the hall, in the studio or, indeed, at home.

WHAT TIPPETT HAD IN MIND

The first commercial recording came in 1958 with a stalwart Tippett champion – **John Pritchard** – conducting Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra forces for Decca, with soloists including Elsie Morison, Pamela Bowden and Richard Lewis – all names to be reckoned with. The vivid transfer on Belart captures the energy and passion of a performance that combines eloquence and expertise with admirable clarity of texture, typical Pritchard qualities that had been evident when he conducted the Covent Garden premiere of *The Midsummer Marriage* in 1955. But these were heady days in Liverpool, where Pritchard was a bold proponent of new music, and his *Child* is a natural document of what had by then emerged as a near-definitive account of what Tippett had in mind. The oratorio made the composer's name in Britain virtually overnight, and partly thanks to his publisher now being Schott of Mainz it was slowly but steadily spreading through Europe, too – no less a figure than Herbert von Karajan conducted it in the composer's presence in Turin in 1953, surreal though that may seem today! Despite being indispensable in historic and 'authentic' terms, this Liverpool



Herschel Grynszpan: the 'child of our time'

recording is sadly ruled out of court by the singing of woolly bass Richard Standen, whose lethargic delivery is too much John Le Mesurier's Sgt Wilson on a particularly dull day in Walmington-on-Sea.

Three of the eight discs of *A Child of Our Time* issued so far feature the glorious bass of the late John Shirley-Quirk; and there are also three performances conducted by **Colin Davis**. These two figures coincided in 1975 for a Philips recording by the BBC Symphony Orchestra at Wembley Town Hall in which the line-up also featured Dame Janet Baker and Jessye Norman. For so many of us growing up back then this became, partly by default, so much the definitive version on disc that returning to it now throws up many difficult questions. Davis first worked with Tippett (on television) in the late 1950s, and his first, groundbreaking Tippett premiere was the Concerto for Orchestra at Edinburgh in 1963, which he then recorded pretty quickly. His Tippett discography by 1975 was extensive and included two operas, three symphonies and the Piano Concerto

with John Ogdon. His *Child* was therefore built on a unique performing tradition which went on to encompass *The Ice Break*, *The Mask of Time*, *The Rose Lake* and the Triple Concerto. Davis had a crusading zeal and Tippett was extraordinarily blessed in his advocacy. But something now feels wrong about Davis's first *A Child of Our Time*. It fails to gel as a cumulative experience and the unfolding continuity seems artificially generated. Every movement in itself is admirably paced and the singing of Baker and Shirley-Quirk in particular is magnificent and moving; however...

OPPOSITE ENDS OF THE SPECTRUM

Jessye Norman was a not-inconsiderable star already by 1975 and so her casting here was not only a coup but also true to type. Her empathy and intuitive expertise at singing the Spirituals was something she also went on to demonstrate in public performances, notably under Tippett's own baton at the BBC Proms in 1979. Her voluptuous tone is immediately arresting on disc and she sails through her sections with unassailable authority. But despite the vocal magnificence on display, Norman conspicuously failed to move me on this listening. She sings the words powerfully but doesn't engage properly with their inner meaning: 'Reason is true to itself; But pity breaks open the heart' sings Baker in her memorable first entry, and it is that very ability to move – which Dame Janet has in spades – that eludes Norman here. The other problem with this disc is the 'Child' himself, American tenor Richard Cassilly, who has a squealing voice at best, which under pressure becomes painfully strangled and by repeated listening is quite unbearable. We'll see if Davis fares better in his two later (live) recordings.

The same BBC forces and the sterling Shirley-Quirk came together again under then principal conductor **Gennadi Rozhdestvensky** at the Royal Festival Hall for a BBCSO 50th-anniversary concert in 1980 which was luckily captured for posterity. The only weakish link here is tenor Kenneth Woollam, who tends to blowsiness but is at least passionate.

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

DATE / ARTISTS	RECORD COMPANY (REVIEW DATE)
1958 RLPO / Pritchard	Belart (F) 461 123-2; Decca (F) (2) 473 421-2 (3/77 ^R , 12/89 ^R - nla)
1975 BBC SO / C Davis	Decca (S) (4) 475 7172DC4 (11/75 ^S , 11/87 ^S , 9/95 ^R)
1980 BBC SO / Rozhdestvensky	BBC Radio Classics (S) BBCRD9130; BBC Legends (F) BBCM5013-2 (11/95 - nla)
1986 RPO / Previn	Carlton Classics (F) 30367 0205-2; RPO (F) CDRPO8005 (1/87, 8/97 ^R - nla)
1991 CBSO / Tippett	Naxos (B) 8 557570 (9/92 ^R , 5/05)
1992 LSO / Hickox	Chandos (F) CHAN9123 (2/93)
2003 Staatskapelle Dresden / C Davis	Profil (F) PH07052 (3/08)
2007 LSO / C Davis	LSO Live (M) (S), LSO0670 (9/08)

SIR SIMON RATTLE & MAGDALENA KOŽENÁ

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BRNO PHILHARMONIC \ MORAVIAN PHILHARMONIC OLOMOUC \ B. MARTINŮ PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA \
PRAGUE SPRING FESTIVAL \ MAHLER JIHLAVA FESTIVAL \ DVOŘÁK OLOMOUC FESTIVAL \ JANÁČEK MAY FESTIVAL \
CONCETUS MORAVIAE/CZECH DREAMS FESTIVAL \ MARTINŮ FEST \ EUROPEAN FESTIVAL OF ACCORDION ORCHESTRAS \
NEW OPERA OSTRAVA DAYS \ COLOURS OF OSTRAVA – CZECH CROSSROADS \ INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL
OF ACADEMIC CHOIRS IFAS \ DVOŘÁK CHORAL SUMMER OR-FEA \ JARMILA NOVOTNÁ FESTIVAL LITEŇ \
ČESKÝ KRUMLOV FESTIVAL \ DVOŘÁK PRAGUE FESTIVAL \ STRINGS OF AUTUMN \ HARMONIA MORAVIAE FESTIVAL \
KROMĚŘÍŽ MUSIC SUMMER \ JANÁČEK PRAGUE \ JANÁČEK BRNO \ NETWORK OF BASIC ART SCHOOLS \
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Jill Gomez is a searing, suitably vulnerable soprano and Helen Watts is simply magisterial, as one would expect from the best Madame Sosostis in the business! And here, concert-hall advantages over Davis in the studio become immediately apparent: a sense of the soloists as a communal team rather than a group of disparate individuals and a natural sense of both musical and dramatic evolution as the work opens out. This is pretty much the performance of which dreams are made.

A DREAM RENDITION

With Shirley-Quirk present a third time, in 1986 the dream finally makes it: under **André Previn's** sensitive guidance at Abbey Road with the RPO and Laszlo Heltay's superb Brighton Festival Chorus and soloists Sheila Armstrong, Felicity Palmer and Philip Langridge. No weak link at all here, but a perfect ensemble totally in tune with every touch in the tale and seamlessly involved with chorus and orchestra at their peak – the studio is no obstacle either to continuity or spontaneity and every detail is achieved with natural eloquence and ease. But the single presence that lifts this account head and shoulders above every other is Langridge's extraordinary rendition of the central role: alive to every nuance in text and music his is the beating heart of a glorious performance and the very embodiment of the Jungian plea 'I would know my shadow and my light, so shall I at last be whole', which becomes the lodestar and climax of the work as a whole. Of all these discs as heard in random sequence, this is the only one that had me suddenly in tears and catching my breath. Issued on its own RPO label but with favourite Previn producer Suvi Raj Grubb in charge, this priceless document is probably hard to obtain today – it should somehow be reissued immediately.

YOU CAN'T HAVE YOUR CAKE...

Naxos has sensibly acquired the Collins Classics version conducted by **Michael Tippett** himself in 1991 which is self-recommending as a historic document: it was the last disc he was to conduct, and well into his 87th year it represents a heroic and arduous achievement in every sense. The combined forces gave their all for the then-frail composer, who was virtually blind and easily exhausted – but woe betide anyone at that time who assumed he wasn't on the ball! There are details here which don't emerge as clearly or forcibly in any other performance, most notably the *secco pp* chord in the strings just after the alto quietly notes the shooting of the official. Frailties are few, but some will perhaps



Tippett at his 60th party with Britten, who helped to arrange the oratorio's premiere, and Peter Pears

find the second and fourth Spirituals oddly slow. This was no concession at all to age, but a deliberate nod by Tippett to his original intentions, and with happy disregard of printed tempi or metronome marks. Going back to Pritchard in 1958 we find – more or less – the same, slowish speeds. Turn to Davis, and they get faster and faster. Rozhdestvensky and Previn achieve a happy medium, whereas, with the best will in the world and authentic imprimatur notwithstanding, Tippett's tempi here do sound simply too slow and lumbering. The other technical drawback is that the strong bass John Cheek seems to be singing from the green room when fantastic American soprano Faye Robinson and the brilliant Sarah Walker are clearly huddled lovingly around their conductor with the good tenor Jon Garrison sounding about halfway between them.

The Chandos sound for **Richard Hickox** and the LSO is the best on any of these discs and both playing and choral singing are superb. The notion of a quartet of black singers probably seemed inspired in the planning, but the reality is sadly a vocal disappointment. Willard White is naturally commanding but there is something strangely artificial about the emotion of this performance from start to finish, and it precludes repeated listening. The same is true of **Colin Davis's** 2003 Dresden Staatskapelle taping, but for different reasons. Here the emotion throughout is genuine and palpable but none of the soloists, especially alto Nora Gubisch and tenor Jerry Hadley, is really bearable on disc: this is more a document to note than a performance to hear. Luckily, however,

the LSO Live version of 2007 is of a different order and provides compelling testimony to Sir Colin's deepening involvement (and humming commentary) in this score, and the personal devotion to him of both orchestra and chorus. The soloists are not stars – Indra Thomas, Mihoko Fujimura, Steve Davislim and Matthew Rose – but they all convince and cohere and the flow of the music is inevitable and cumulative, not manufactured and rigid as in 1975. As one of his last LSO Barbican discs this is the version by which to remember and treasure one of the greatest British conductors in the indestructible masterpiece that was so close to his heart. **G**



TOP CHOICE

RPO / André Previn

RPO © CDRPO8005

André Previn brings a composer's sympathy and insight into this flowing account which has the advantage of a perfect quartet of soloists: John Shirley-Quirk on top form and Philip Langridge by a very wide margin the best tenor ever to have recorded this great work.



Visit the Gramophone Player at gramophone.co.uk to hear excerpts from this month's featured recordings

PERFORMANCES & EVENTS

There's a feast of music-making from around the world during the month of July, live in the concert hall and opera house, on the radio and the web, on television, and in the cinema

EVENT OF THE MONTH



July
11

Seattle & KING FM radio

Under the artistic direction of violinist James Ehnes, the Seattle Chamber Music

Society's Summer Festival offers 12 chamber music concerts from July 7 to August 2 at the Nordstrom Recital Hall at Benaroya Hall. The July 11 programme features Mozart's Flute Quartet, K285, with flautist Lorna McGhee, violinist Augustin Hadelich, viola player Richard O'Neill and cellist Ronald Thomas; Brahms's Piano Quartet, Op 25, with violinist Amy Schwartz Moretti, viola player Cynthia Phelps, cellist Robert deMaine and pianist Jon Kimura Parker; and Igor Stravinsky's *The Soldier's Tale*, featuring violinist James Ehnes. All festival concerts are broadcast by KING FM, which also hosts informal, in-depth discussions about the works.

seattlechambermusic.org

June 15
July 9

San Francisco & KDFC radio & web

San Francisco Opera stages a new production of Puccini's *Madama Butterfly* by Jun Kaneko, designer of the company's 2012 production of *The Magic Flute*. Patricia Racette stars in the lead role of Cio-Cio-San, alongside Elizabeth DeShong as Butterfly's maid Suzuki, Brian Jagde as Pinkerton and Brian Mulligan as Sharpless under conductors Nicola Luisotti and Giuseppe Finzi. The production forms part of San Francisco Opera's summer season during June and July, which includes performances of *Showboat* and *La traviata*, all of which are broadcast on KDFC radio throughout the San Francisco Bay Area on Sunday nights. Audiences can also listen online at kdfc.com and on demand after the initial broadcast. sfopera.com

June 18

Berlin & web & cinemas

The Berlin Philharmonic and Sir Simon Rattle are joined by Daniel Barenboim – who this season celebrates the 50th anniversary of his Berlin Phil debut – for Brahms's Piano Concerto No 1. Also on the programme are Ives's *The Unanswered Question* and Richard Strauss's *Metamorphosen*. The

concert is being broadcast live, both to the Digital Concert Hall online and to cinemas across Europe. berliner-philharmoniker.de

June 28

Sarajevo & television & radio

The European Broadcasting Union joins with the Vienna PO and public television channels in France, Germany and Bosnia-Herzegovina to commemorate the centenary of World War I. The performance, featuring the Opera Choir of the National Theatre of Sarajevo and conducted by Franz Welser-Möst, takes place in Sarajevo's Vijećnica, exactly 100 years after the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand. In addition to being relayed on video screens outside the building, the concert of works by Haydn, Schubert, Berg, Brahms and Ravel is being recorded for live or deferred broadcast on television and radio worldwide. ebu.ch

July 4 & 5

Cologne & WDR radio & web

Kent Nagano conducts the WDR Sinfonieorchester Köln in two performances of Bruckner's Symphony No 9 and Dvořák's Violin Concerto with soloist Frank Peter Zimmermann – a work the German

violinist recorded with the LPO in 1993 under Franz Welser-Möst for EMI. The first concert is broadcast live on German radio station WDR 3 and streamed online for international audiences.

wdr.de/radio/orchester/sinfonieorchester

July 5 & 6

Dresden

The Dresden Philharmonic's artist-in-residence, violinist Julia Fischer, performs several programmes of Brahms over two days, including the Double Concerto conducted by Michael Sanderling with cellist Daniel Müller-Schott, and the Third Piano Trio, again with Müller-Schott and pianist Simon Trpčeski. The performances take place in Dresden's State Playhouse on the evening of July 5, and in the afternoon and evening of July 6.

dresdnerphilharmonie.de

July 6

Beijing & television & radio

Semyon Bychkov conducts the China Philharmonic Orchestra in a concert to close the season, featuring Schubert's *Unfinished* Symphony No 8 and Shostakovich's Symphony No 4 in the Forbidden City Concert Hall. The concert is broadcast in the People's Republic of China as part

of the orchestra's ties to the State Administration of Radio, Film and Television. fcchbj.com

July 7 London & BBC Radio 3
Long-term collaborators, tenor Mark Padmore and pianist Julius Drake, unite to perform Schubert songs, including two of the composer's late Refrain Lieder – 'Irdisches Glück' and 'Bei dir allein!' – plus, 'Der Wanderer an den Mond', 'Im Freien' and 'Das Zünglein'. Padmore is an experienced Schubert interpreter, having recorded four albums of the composer's songs, three with Paul Lewis for Harmonia Mundi. The Wigmore Hall concert is broadcast live on BBC Radio 3 as part of the station's Monday Lunchtime Concerts series. wigmore-hall.org.uk

July 9 Canterbury & BBC Radio 3
BBC Radio 3 presents a live broadcast of *Choral Evensong* from Canterbury Cathedral, as part of the station's long-running programme focusing on sung Evensong services from around the UK. The choir of 25 choristers and 12 lay clerks is directed by master of the cathedral choristers and cathedral organist Dr David Flood. bbc.co.uk/radio3

July 11 Tanglewood & WGBH radio & web
Andris Nelsons conducts the Boston Symphony Orchestra in an all-Dvořák programme, featuring *The Noonday Witch*, Symphony No 8 and the Violin Concerto with soloist Anne-Sophie Mutter. The concert forms part of the BSO's Tanglewood Summer Festival and is broadcast live from the Koussevitzky Music Shed by WGBH radio throughout New England. International audiences can access the performance online through the BSO Media Center in the week following the original performance, and for up to a year thereafter. bso.org

July 14 Évian-les-Bains
Violinist Gidon Kremer and his Kremerata Baltica perform a chamber music programme including Desyatnikov's *Wie der alte Leiermann*, Schubert's *Quartettsatz* String Quartet, Liszt's *Valses-caprices* No 6 and Weinberg's Chamber Symphony No 4. The concert forms part of the Rencontres Musicales d'Évian Festival, taking place after a hiatus of 13 years on the shores of Lake Geneva in two unique venues – the

wooden Grange au Lac auditorium and the neo-classical Casino Theatre. Established in 1976 and developed by Mstislav Rostropovich, the festival this year also features Daniel Müller-Schott, Nicholas Angelich and Renaud Capuçon. rencontres-musicales-evian.fr

Jul 18–Aug 2 Petworth
The Petworth Festival features classical, jazz and world music performances, including solo recitals by pianist Garrick Ohlsson, tenor Ian Bostridge and violinist Tasmin Little, alongside Nicholas Daniel's Haffner Ensemble, the London Conchord Ensemble, the Fitzwilliam Quartet and vocal group The Cardinal's Musick. Leading accompanist Roger Vignoles once again introduces Petworth audiences to an international singer – Norwegian soprano Marita Sølberg. petworthfestival.org.uk

Jul 18–Aug 3 Verbier Festival & Medici.tv
The Verbier Festival continues its partnership with Medici.tv for a seventh consecutive season, with live webcasts of 27 festival concerts in the Swiss Alps. Highlights include pianist Martha Argerich performing Tchaikovsky's Piano Concerto No 1 with the Verbier Festival Orchestra under Charles Dutoit on July 18; *Gramophone* 2013 Young Artist of the Year Jan Lisiecki performing solo Chopin, Grieg and Mendelssohn on July 21; a concert performance of Berlioz's *The Damnation of Faust* featuring Ramón Vargas and Willard White on July 21; Renaud Capuçon in Sibelius's Violin Concerto alongside Bruckner's Eighth Symphony under Jaap van Zweden on July 31; and chamber music featuring Joshua Bell, Yuri Bashmet, Steven Isserlis and Marc-André Hamelin on August 1. medici.tv

July 21 Dallas: WWR Classical radio & web
Dallas-based radio station WWR Classical broadcasts the Dallas Symphony Orchestra's Beethoven programme throughout the Texas region and to international audiences via online streaming at 8pm CDT. Recorded live at the Meyerson Symphony Center from May 15–18 this year, and conducted by principal conductor Jaap van Zweden, the concert features Beethoven's *Egmont* Overture, Symphony No 5 and Triple Concerto, with violinist Alexander Kerr, cellist Alisa Weilerstein and pianist Martin Helmchen. wrr101.com

July 22 Ravinia Festival & WFMT radio
James Conlon and soloists from the Chicago Symphony Orchestra present a programme including Wagner's *Siegfried Idyll*, Eisler's *Fourteen Ways of Describing the Rain* (accompanied by the silent film), Hindemith's *Overture to The Flying Dutchman*, as *Sight-read by a Bad Spa Orchestra at 7am by the Well*, and Korngold's String Sextet, Op 10. The performance forms part of the Ravinia Festival, the CSO's summer residency running from June to September, and is broadcast on WFMT radio alongside other chamber and recital performances from the festival's Martin Theatre and Bennett Gordon Hall. ravinia.org

July 25 & 26 Adelaide
Young American maestro Eugene Tzigane makes his Australian debut conducting the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra in Bartók's virtuoso Concerto for Orchestra, Peter Sculthorpe's *Sun Song* and *From Oceania* in celebration of the composer's 85th birthday, and Dvořák's Cello Concerto with soloist Alban Gerhardt. The two performances in Adelaide's Town Hall are preceded by hour-long introductions to the works by musicologist and educator Christabel Saddler. On Sunday July 27, Alban Gerhardt appears in a further solo recital in the city's Elder Hall for Recitals Australia. aso.com.au

Jul 28–Aug 3 Bristol & Classic FM radio
Baritone Bryn Terfel, pianist Valentina Lisitsa and violinists Lisa Batiashvili and Daniel Hope, as well as The English Concert conducted by Robert Howarth, are among the artists appearing in productions created especially for the second annual Bristol Proms. Classic FM presenters Tim Lihoreau, John Suchet, Jamie Crick, John Brunning and Jane Jones broadcast programmes from the Bristol Old Vic throughout the week. classicfm.com



Lisa Batiashvili is performing at the Bristol Proms

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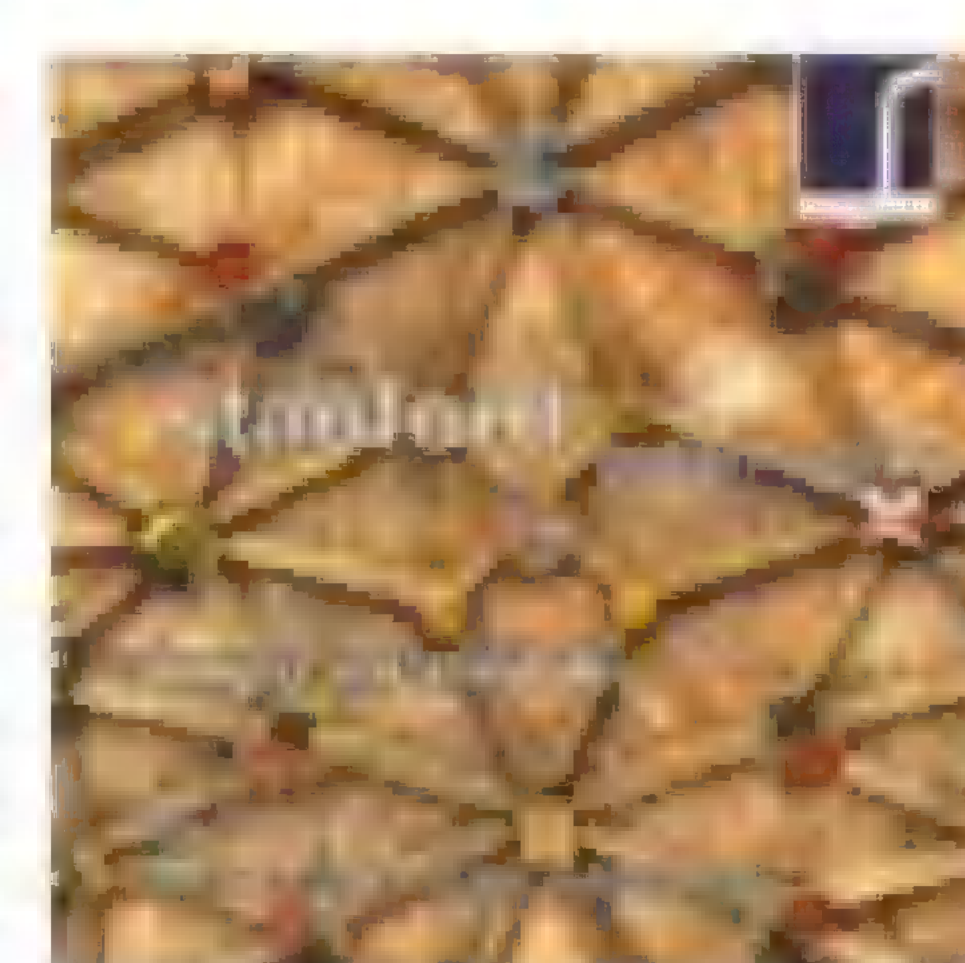
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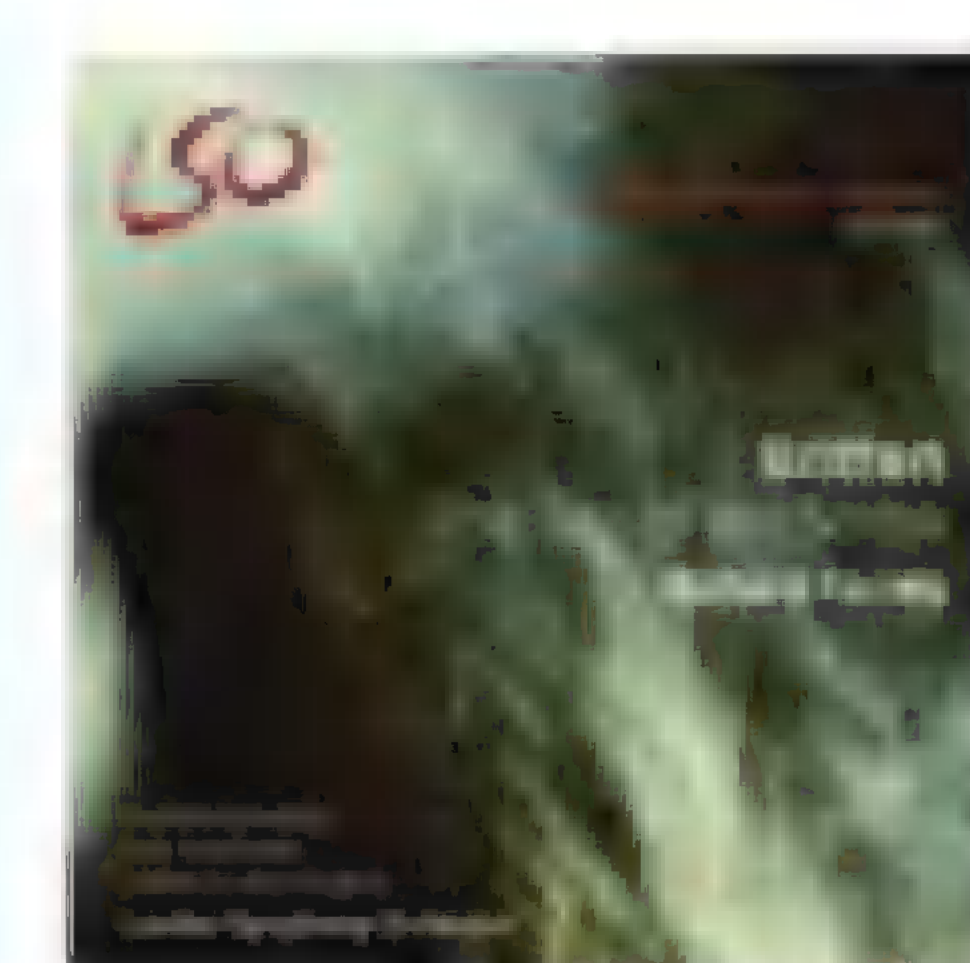


THIS MONTH a pair of floorstanding speakers from a famous British name offering superb value, and a luxury system from two more celebrated brands.
Andrew Everard, Audio Editor

JULY TEST DISCS



Another excellent high-resolution download from Resonus, this second set of Stanford organ works by Simon Niemiński has both power and delicacy.



Dramatic, superbly live-feeling and entirely thrilling: experience the high-resolution download of Britten's *The Turn of the Screw* on LSO Live.

High-end hi-fi is alive and well

Top-notch audio equipment just keeps on coming, from headphones to complete systems



As I explain in this month's Audio Essay (page 119), it only took one day to reassure me that the market for high-quality, high-end audio equipment apparently remains viable enough for manufacturers to invest in research and development. To spend the morning hearing about (and hearing) Linn's £25,500 Akurate Exakt system, and then the afternoon with Oppo's £1000+ PM-1 headphones, was both hugely enjoyable and a sign that the audio industry is in pretty rude health.

Linn's Akurate Exakt system sees the company's 'The source is in the speaker' technology trickling down from the £50,000 Klimax Exakt set-up launched last year to something at around half the price: it comprises the Akurate Exakt digital streamer/preamplifier and Exakt Akubarik speakers, connected using Exakt Link cables and with the digital-to-analogue conversion carried out in the speaker after the onboard Exakt Engine processing has done its stuff.

Meanwhile, Oppo may be best known in the UK and USA for its range of Blu-ray players but it has now made its debut in high-end headphones with the arrival of two models and a high-quality headphone amplifier. The £1099 PM-1 and £699 PM-2 models are built around Oppo's development of the well-established planar magnetic technology, which uses a flat diaphragm sandwiched between drive

elements to give what's said to be a more dynamic and accurate sound than is possible with the conventional coil and cone drivers found in most headphones. Both models are open-backed, the PM-1 using an all-aluminium construction with lambskin-over-latex ear-cushions, and coming with a carry case, wooden presentation box, velour earpads and both 3.5mm and 6.35mm terminated cables. The less expensive PM-2 uses some plastics in place of aluminium components, and synthetic leather, and comes with fewer accessories.

The HA-1 headphone amplifier, meanwhile, has both digital and analogue inputs, can handle both high-resolution PCM and DSD audio, and has a choice of 6.35mm or balanced XLR outputs, for which an optional cable will be available for the headphones. The audio output section is all-analogue, and the range of digital inputs extends to an iPhone/iPad-compatible USB and an asynchronous input for a computer.

On the subject of computer audio and DSD, Pro-Ject has a free DSD upgrade available for users of its DAC Box DS digital-to-analogue converter. Available from the website of distributor Henley Designs for existing users, the upgrade is now being supplied pre-installed on all new DAC Box DS models sold in the UK. The DAC Box DS is £299.

In the home cinema arena, Onkyo has added two more models to its 2014 range

in the form of the £800 TX-NR737 and £1000 TX-NR838, built around a design philosophy the company brands as 'Emotion Delivered'. At the heart of this is a high-current amplifier design, aimed at handling speaker impedance fluctuations and dynamic demands to give accurate and direct delivery of film soundtracks.

Streaming is also at the heart of the new Roomplayer+ from Simple Audio, which can handle music at up to 24-bit/192kHz, cater for multiple music libraries and multiple users, and has built-in Powerline support for Ethernet connection over mains wiring. Internet radio is also built in, and there's a new operating system, a faster processor and increased memory. The Roomplayer+ is available in two versions: as standard, for connection to an existing amplifier, at £599, or with built-in amplification at £699. ⑤

- ① Linn's Akurate Exakt system makes the 'source is in the speaker' concept more affordable
- ② Oppo aims for the high-end luxury audio market with its new PM-1 headphones and HA-1 amplifier
- ③ Free upgrade brings high-resolution DSD playback to Pro-Ject's DAC Box DS digital-to-analogue converter
- ④ Onkyo's new receivers claim fine musical performance as well as having all the latest surround features
- ⑤ Simple Audio's Roomplayer+ brings enhanced audio quality, higher resolution and a wider range of functionality

● REVIEW PRODUCT OF THE MONTH

Bowers & Wilkins 684 S2

Sensibly priced and with an attractive sound, these floorstanding speakers are a fine buy

The 600 Series speakers have been a major success for Bowers & Wilkins, one of the best-known British loudspeaker names on the worldwide audio market. B&W speakers can be found in studios worldwide, with various iterations of the 800 Series becoming a default monitoring choice for many classical music recordings over the years.

The company has built on this association with its Society of Sound, offering members downloadable high-resolution music each month for an annual subscription, of late featuring an association with the London Symphony Orchestra. Meanwhile, recent years have also seen the company diversifying its product offering with the likes of the Zeppelin iPod speaker systems and a range of headphones.

The 600 Series is the company's core mainstream speaker range, and has been for almost two decades. There had been DM600 models before – the prefix being B&W's designation for 'Domestic Monitor' speakers – but the antecedents of the current speakers are in the 1995 launch of the DM601 to DM604. In fact, the current line-up, starting with the standmount 686 S2 – in this range, the larger the number the smaller the speaker – is the fifth generation of B&W 600 Series speakers.

Beyond the little 686 S2, at £350 a pair, the range progresses through the larger 685 S2 standmounts (£500/pr) up to the large 683 S2 floorstanding model (£1150/pr, taking in a choice of centre- and rear-channel speakers, plus subwoofers, for surround sound use. The 684 S2 we have here, very sensibly priced at £800/pr, is a smaller floorstander, the cabinet being

both slim and compact. It's just 16cm wide and a bit over 23cm deep, and stands 92cm tall, with the stabilising plinth adding a little to the height and more to the width. That slimming-down has been helped by the adoption of smaller drive units: the S2 version of the 684 uses two 13cm mid/bass units in place of the 16.5cm drivers of the old model, B&W saying that advances in technology have enabled improvements in performance despite the smaller cones, and that the smaller voice-coils employed here increase sensitivity.

As has been the case throughout the modern history of the 600 Series, the new models make use of technology trickled down from products further up the company's range. Since the DM601-604s of 1995, one of the hallmarks of the 600 Series has been the use of B&W's yellow woven Kevlar cones for mid/bass drivers, now

SPECIFICATION

Type Floorstanding loudspeakers

Price £800/pr

Drive units Two 13cm woven Kevlar mid/bass drivers, 25mm aluminium dome tweeter

Frequency response 72kHz-22kHz +/-3dB on-axis, -6dB at 45Hz and 50kHz

Crossover frequency 4kHz

Sensitivity 87dB/1W/1m

Nominal impedance 8 ohms (min 4 ohms)

Recommended amplifier power 25-150W

Finishes Black ash with black grille, white with light grey grille

Dimensions (HxWxD) 92x16x23.4cm (cabinet), 95.5x23.5x23.8 (with plinth)

bowers-wilkins.co.uk

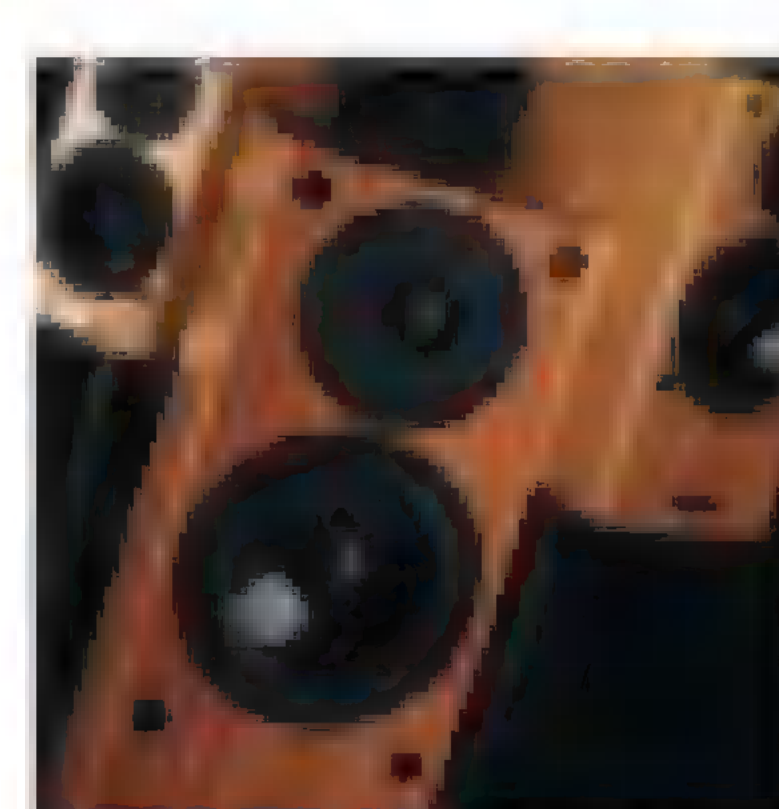


widely copied both in the weave and in some cases in the colour.

Until then, most speaker cones had been variations on doped paper or polycarbonate, but almost always black – the bright yellow B&W cones were striking back in 1995, and still are almost two decades on. Here, that pair of drivers features Anti-Resonance Plug dustcaps derived from the company's PM1 speakers, designed to improve piston movement inside the voice coil in the quest for distortion-free midrange performance. Bass tuning employs a front-venting Flowport tube, the inner surface of which is dimpled like a golf ball to smooth the flow of air and avoid 'chuffing' caused by pressure build-up in the port. Two-part foam plug/rings are provided to allow the user to reduce the amount of bass delivered if required.

Above these drivers, and mounted in its own gel-filled cavity to decouple it from

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SUGGESTED PARTNERS

To drive the B&W 684 S2s you'll need a suitable amplifier. Here are a couple of suggestions...

ROTEL RA-1570 AMPLIFIER

Rotel is distributed in the UK by B&W, so the RA-1570 amplifier, complete with USB digital input, would make a fine match with the 684 S2.



NAIMUNITI2

The latest version of Naim's original all-in-one network music system, the NaimUniti2 has more than enough power and control to drive the B&Ws well.



the main cabinet, is the 25mm Decoupled Double Dome aluminium tweeter, which uses a cut-away second skin on the dome to improve rigidity without adding too much mass. That technology is drawn from B&W's CM10 speaker, while the Nautilus tube loading behind the dome is derived from models stretching back to the strikingly sculptural speaker of the same name, in which straight and spiral tubes were used to back-load each driver, absorbing unwanted sound.

PERFORMANCE

Unpack the 684s and only minimal assembly is required: the plinths have to be attached to the base of the cabinet using bolts, spacers and washers (for which an Allen key is provided), and then either rubber feet – for hard floors – or carpet-piercing spikes and locknuts are fitted to the plinth.

The terminals to the rear of the speakers make provision for biwiring or biamplication should you wish, and for stereo use B&W suggests the speakers be used at least 0.5m from side and rear walls, and between 1.5 and 3m apart, depending on the listening distance. Basically the old idea of the speakers and listening positioning forming the three points of an equilateral triangle applies here, and while there's no advice about toe-in, I found angling the speakers very slightly towards the listening position, so the outer side-panels of the cabinets were just visible, helped focus the stereo image.

Listening, it's hard not to conclude that B&W has again produced a very commercial design, offering remarkable value for money. True, the speakers do sound a bit brash and light in the bass straight from the box but – after some use to flex the driver surrounds and get some heat into them – they soon settle down and show just what they can do.

What they do is deliver a confident, dramatic view of a wide range of music, with a pleasingly natural tonality, well-weighted and tightly controlled bass to give substance without impeding the rhythmic flow of music, and plenty of impact and ambience without ever becoming fatiguing. True, they're not the biggest-sounding speakers you can buy – for that, perhaps the larger 683s might better fit the bill – but music

never sounds anaemic, and the scale of, say, a full-band symphonic work is delivered as impressively as you're going to get from any speaker this side of £1000.

What's beyond doubt is that these are extremely revealing speakers for the money, giving excellent insight into anything from simple chamber works to a full orchestra or choral ensemble, with striking clarity and intelligibility even with a complex piece, and a beautifully detailed view of the technique of solo performers.

What's more, they're easy speakers to drive, B&W quoting 87dB/W/m sensitivity and an 8 ohm nominal impedance, falling to a minimum of 4 ohms, and suggesting amplifiers from 25W upwards will be sufficient to drive them. While they'll certainly work well enough with low-powered amplifiers, they do rather thrive when connected to something with rather more power (they can be used with amplifiers of up to 150W), which has the effect of making the most of their superb dynamic ability and openness. They worked extremely well on the end of my reference Naim Supernait2 amplifier, sounded huge if occasionally a shade over-exuberant when connected to an Onkyo TX-NR818 AV receiver, and were even very enjoyable when using an old Marantz amplifier from more than a few years back.

All of which suggests that these speakers would be a fine match for the Rotel amplifiers B&W distributes: the little RA-10, at around £350, would be more than up to the job in smaller rooms, while I could imagine the 684s partnering very well with the rather more potent RA-1520, which at £1200 is a more obvious partner for a pair of £800 speakers. However, the controlled presentation of these speakers, achieved without any obvious restraint, should make these very easy speakers to partner with a wide range of source components and amplification, which is just as one would hope for a design clearly aimed at the widest possible appeal.

Use the 684s with a decent amplifier and CD player (or streamer), or with an amplifier such as the RA-1570 connected to a computer, and you'd have the makings of a very fine system, combining the sleek good looks of the speakers with exceptional sound quality. **G**

Or you could try...

The Bowers & Wilkins 684 S2 are a conspicuous bargain. But what if you want a pair of speakers on a tighter budget or you have the luxury of being able to spend rather more? Here are a couple of alternatives...

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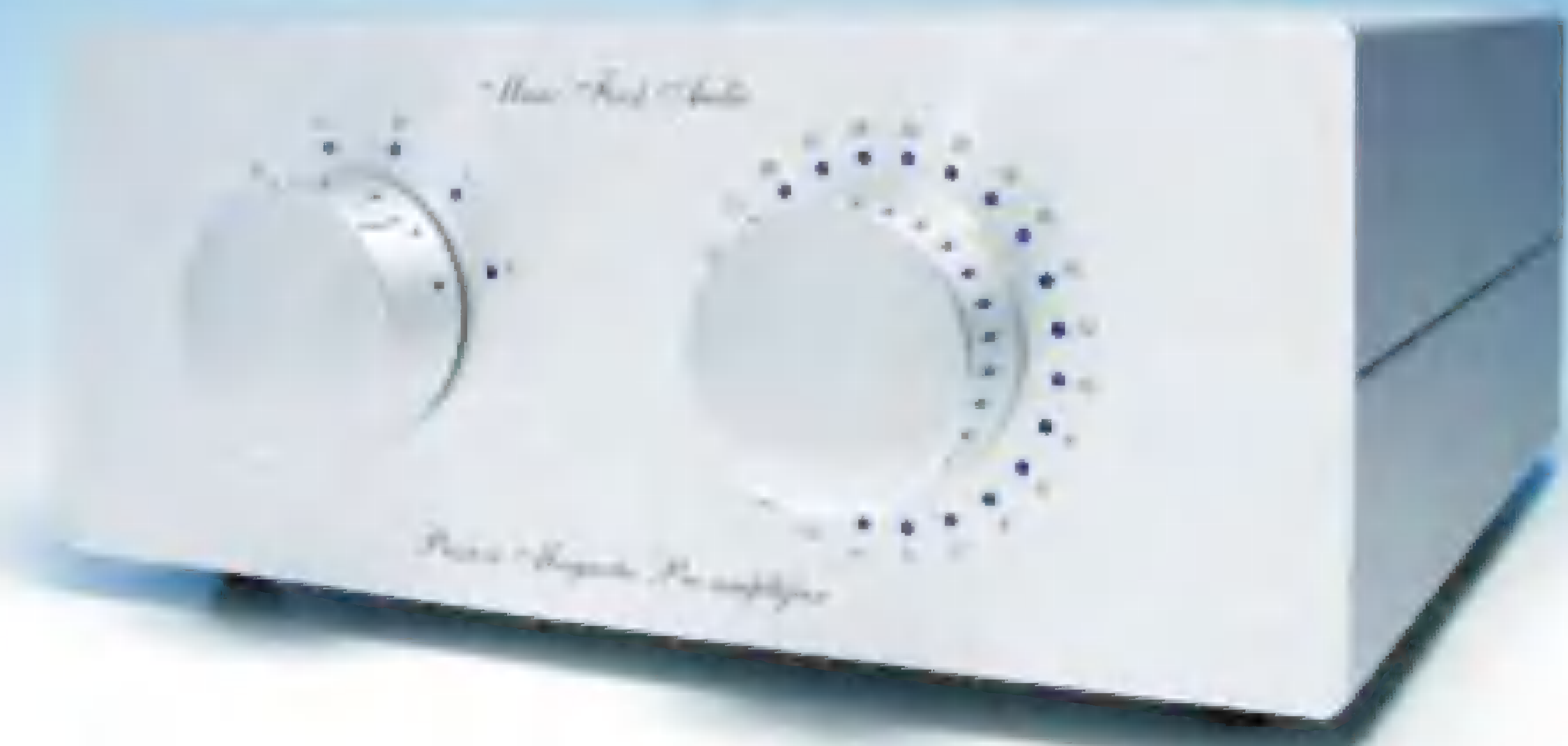
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CEDIA

● REVIEW NAIM FOR BENTLEY PREMIUM AUDIO SYSTEM

High-class in-car sounds are the Naim of the game

The best-sounding on-road sound system has a new home in the latest Flying Spur

Almost 10 years have passed since work started on the 'Naim for Bentley' project, which saw the British hi-fi manufacturer partnering with the luxury car maker to design a premium in-car audio system. Having seen its development from a dusty Bentley saloon in a large garage at Naim HQ to an acclaimed installation, as popular with customers as it has been with both motoring and technology reviewers, I was keen to hear how the 'NfB' system stacked up in its latest version.

This system is widely acknowledged as the best in the business, so I accepted the opportunity to have another listen, somehow managing to ignore the 'mains adaptor' kit Bentley provided so I could do the entire review on my driveway had I chosen to do so. Over the course of about 600 miles of motoring I had the chance to try the system in town, on motorways and on A roads.

As standard, the car has a six-disc CD changer in the glove compartment, CD and SD card slots in the main 'infotainment' unit and inputs for an iPod also in the glove box, while a £5475 rear-seat entertainment and connectivity package brings separate iPod, USB, HDMI and DVD/CD playback devices for each rear seat, connected to wireless headphones and 10in displays on the back of the front seats, not to mention an onboard Wi-Fi hotspot.

The standard entertainment system includes an eight-channel, eight-speaker audio set-up using Balanced Mode Radiator drive units; but the Naim for Bentley Premium Audio package, a £5610 upgrade, gives the car 13 channels of amplification totalling 1100W, eight enhanced DSP modes including a 'Naim Audiophile' setting, 11 Naim-designed speakers including a pair of substantial subwoofers, dynamic equalisation and speed-dependent volume control, and a 'theatre surround' system.

PERFORMANCE

Once the initial nervousness of driving something so valuable (and so huge) was overcome, I was able to give some attention to the audio system, and I was initially disappointed to find that the potentially very useful SD card slot was only compatible with MP3 or WMA files, meaning that I had to resort to CDs loaded into the glovebox



SPECIFICATION

NAIM FOR BENTLEY PREMIUM AUDIO SYSTEM

Type In-car hi-fi system

Price £5610 for audio upgrade package; vehicle from £140,900

Power 1100W total over 13 channels

Speakers 11, including two subwoofers

Inputs SD card, CD changer, iPod

Radio DAB/FM

Equalisation Various sound modes, including 'Naim Audiophile'

naimaudio.com; bentleymotors.com

changer, or an iPod connected via the cable also hardwired in, loaded with a wide variety of music in CD-quality WAV format. Bluetooth connectivity is also available for suitable smartphones and tablets.

There's no denying that the Naim/Bentley system sounds spectacular, with the kind of performance most enthusiasts

'There's no denying that the system sounds spectacular – of course, the near-silence of the car plays a major part'

would be more than delighted with in a home system, let alone a car. Of course, the near-silence of the car environment plays a major part. The disappointments of the system are all on the operational level: the front end of the system is beginning to show its age in the lack of support for formats beyond MP3 and CD – I'd like to see FLAC support in there, for example, along with handling of higher-resolution files – and in the lack of access to track-skip or even album-skip via the steering wheel controls, which only offer volume up/down. The display in front of the driver can be set to display track information, agreed – though I have to admit most of the time I kept it showing a big digital speed readout – but having to reach down

to the main touchscreen to change tracks or albums was slightly distracting, especially in a vehicle with so much performance potential.

But the Naim tuning – and especially that 'Audiophile' mode – is still a revelation. The sheer power and dynamic ability, whether delivering the full force of orchestral music or simply piano and violin with crispness and amazing detail, remains the benchmark for others in-car. What's more, the scale and drama available from the heft of the amplification and the subwoofers – never have I heard a car with bass so forceful and yet so well defined – is frankly amazing, and combines well with the way those BMR drivers deliver pinpoint imaging without ever drawing attention to the location of the speakers. Oh, and it's easier to hold a conversation even with the system pretty loud when the Naim equalisation is on, though I am sure the Naim engineers would really rather you listened to the music.

The Naim for Bentley system remains a standard-setter for car audio, and is equally impressive whether pootling along a country lane with some Chopin tinkling in the background or powering out everything from Bruce Springsteen to Beethoven symphonies. The front end of the set-up may have some catching up to do but the sound is still quite remarkable. **G**

● ESSAY

The audio industry – more reasons to be cheerful

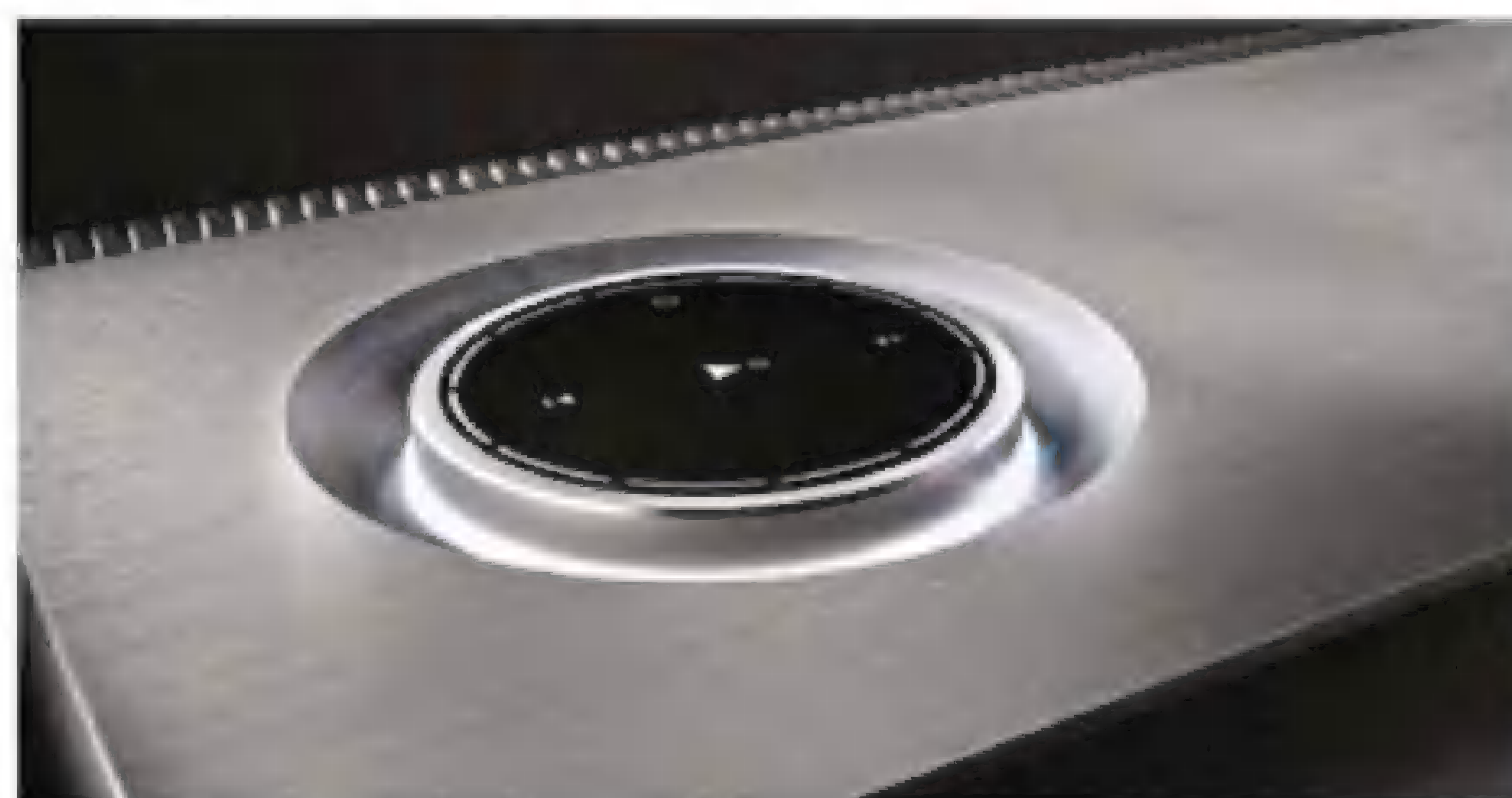
From flagship speakers to innovative and cost-effective contenders, there's a lot out there to enjoy – and to look forward to

A few months back, I wrote an essay unashamedly celebrating the success of British and UK-based audio companies, and suggesting that such operations were worthy of our support. The intervening period has given more cause for optimism, with new launches and some official recognition of what the British audio industry contributes to the economy.

Announced on April 21, a Queen's Award for Enterprise in Innovation was given to Naim Audio for its work on streaming audio products, which started all the way back with its NaimNet range and the HDX recorder/network streamer, and hit its stride with the launch of the Naim Uniti no less than five years ago. The Award recognises 'Naim's innovative design and engineering exemplified in their award-winning range of high-fidelity music streaming products', the company noting that the network music range 'has transformed the business and helped secure double-digit growth for the Salisbury-based company by December 2013'.

Either coincidentally or to help celebrate the award, just four days after the announcement Naim showed that it's far from taking the corporate foot off the innovation pedal, announcing the arrival of its latest product, Muso. It's an all-in-one network music player system complete with built-in active speakers, plus AirPlay streaming alongside Wi-Fi and DLNA capability, and looks set to move Naim into a whole new market sector. It's a pretty radical departure for a company once best known for its multi-box stereo systems – well, as radical as was the original Naim Uniti back in 2009 – and should open up its products to a whole new sector of buyers.

Or indeed it may well bring even greater flexibility to existing owners of Naim network music systems, by offering a compact solution for a second – or third – room. That was part of the appeal of the Linn Kiko system, for example: as well as providing a fuss-free audio system for those



Naim's Muso (above); KEF's Muon speakers (right)

with music on their computers, it also has great appeal as a kitchen or study add-on to an existing Linn DS set-up. It's all part of expanding users' options.

These companies are doing well by playing to their strengths, and the same is the case with the high-end Meridian Special Edition speakers, marking 25 years of the company's digital active designs; mentioned in that original essay on this subject, the speakers are now available to order, at prices from £10,000/pr upwards. Other companies are just discovering

'Naim's Muso is a radical departure for a company once best known for its multi-box stereo systems'

digital active technology: Meridian has been offering this technology for a quarter of a century, and both Linn and Naim have been on the active path for many years.

Mind you, you can spend a lot more on a pair of speakers and the remarkable KEF Muon speakers, launched as a 'statement' design some years back, are now available in an upgraded version. The two-metre tall speakers, with their curvaceous superformed aluminium enclosures designed by Ross Lovegrove, are now available with a new version of KEF's celebrated Uni-Q driver array: this uses rear air-venting, with a tube behind the tweeter containing absorbent materials, and a two-part dome with additional stiffening. The idea is that this assembly retains dome rigidity across the audio band, and the new



drive unit is available as an upgrade for existing Muon owners or as standard on newly delivered Muon speakers. KEF says 'Now, even more so than when originally launched, Muon remains arguably the world's most extraordinary audio speaker ever conceived and produced'. If you fancy a pair, some of the 100-pair production run is still available, at £135,000/pr.

OK, so that's just a company showing what it can do in the cost-no-object arena, but this month's audio news and main review show more real-world examples of continued innovation. Linn, for example, has halved the entry-ticket cost of its impressive Exakt system with the launch of the Akurate Exakt system, and there's the suggestion of scope for the technology to trickle even further down the range, while the same kind of 'cascading' of research and development is behind the remarkable Bowers & Wilkins 600 Series, now in its fifth generation.

The people behind the latest models, including the 684 S2 reviewed this month, seem pretty pleased with what has been achieved using a combination of technology derived from further up the company's range and some innovations developed purely for the new series, and with good cause: the compact floorstanding speakers are a conspicuous audio bargain and a real triumph for the company's UK-based R&D team.

From the top of the tree in the super-elevated high-end sector right down to the kind of products you and I can afford, the UK audio industry continues to offer more reasons to be cheerful. **G**



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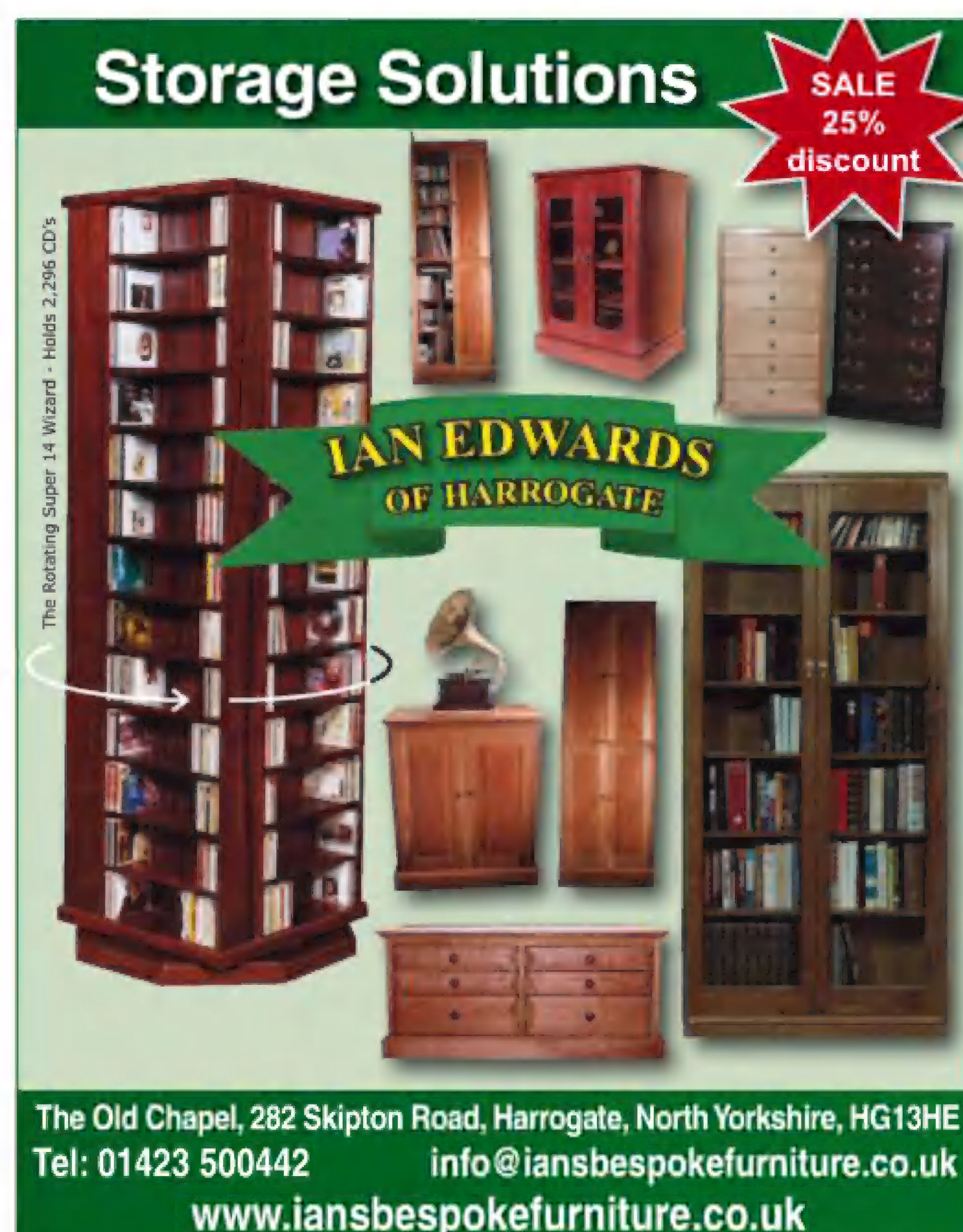
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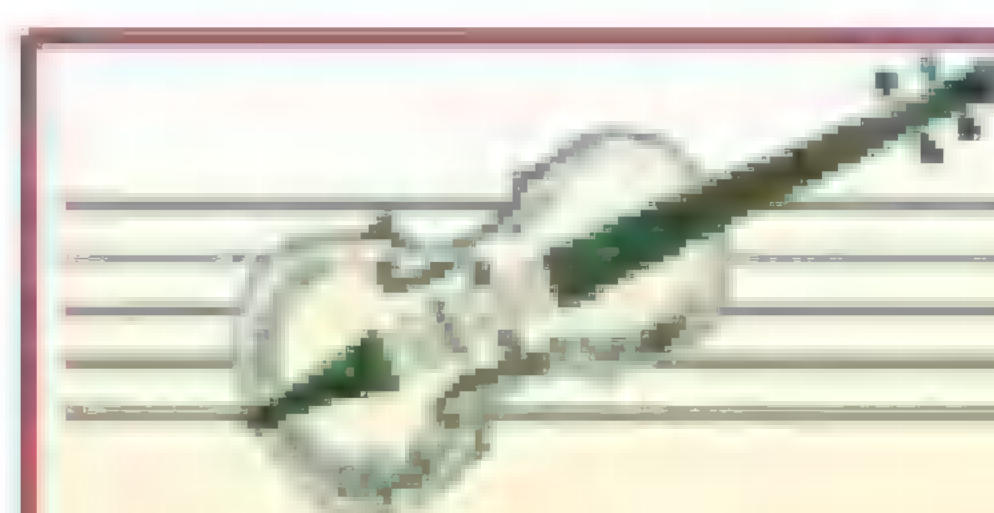
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Always in Bach's shadow: Georg Philipp Telemann

Giving Telemann his dues

I absolutely agree with David Vickers that it has been 'too easy to damn (Georg Philipp) Telemann with faint praise as being merely prolific and charming' (March, page 52). This composer shares with Antonio Salieri the regrettable curse of suffering from Proximity Posterity Syndrome. Any composer so historically associated with JS Bach in history's hindsight (as Telemann has been) or with Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (as Salieri has been) is going to pale in comparison. But for posterity to conclude that any composer is mediocre if he or she is less transcendent than Bach or Mozart sets the bar for non-mediocrity ludicrously high. Venus is the most visible planet in the heavens, but relocate it right next to the sun and who's going to notice it?

Well, Georg Philipp, wherever you are, look at the bright side: at least nobody has ever accused you of having poisoned Bach.

David English

Somerville, MA, USA

Natural trombones

Whilst I can wholeheartedly agree that the Dunedin Consort's new recording of Mozart's Requiem is a very worthy Recording of the Month, I have to wonder what John Butt was on when interviewed about the project (May, page 44). What on earth are 'natural trombones' supposed to be? The ones used on the recording will have been very much like modern trombones, except for a narrower bore and a smaller bell flare. There's nothing more unnatural than a trombone. As one trombonist friend of mine remarked,

Letter of the Month



Favouring slow tempi: Carlo Maria Giulini

When slow doesn't equal profound music-making

Yes, Carlo Maria Giulini was known for his slow tempi (June, page 60, and May, page 88) – and this is, in my opinion, a long unpricked bubble! Slow does not equate to revelatory music-making.

Otto Klemperer and Sergiu Celibidache are but two conductors who are often lauded for what many

musicians see as a parody of the composer's intentions.

Evgeni Svetlanov once came almost to a halt in a somnambulant *Nutcracker* at Covent Garden. Whether old age or ego, slow is slow!

Bob Chasey, Chairman of the Rudolf Kempe Society and BBC Philharmonic violinist

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'Never trust an instrument that changes shape while you play it!'

Graham Stroud

Moseley, Birmingham

Boogie-woogie Beethoven

I would like to endorse your correspondent Frank Boardman's view (May, page 122) that Beethoven takes the palm in the invention of jazz, within the classical idiom. Mr Boardman specifically identifies the second movement of

Op 111, with some justification. However, I would suggest that Beethoven actually made this historical innovation 21 years earlier in the *Pastoral* Sonata, Op 28.

Ever since I first heard it, from the hands of Alfred Brendel, it seems to me that in the slow movement, the extended digressions by the right hand over a steady bass are remarkably similar in nature and content to the best of jazz improvisation. Beethoven was indeed a remarkable improviser, it's generally held, and it



Finding the jazz in Beethoven: Mitsuko Uchida

also accords with Stravinsky's perfect description (of the *Grosse Fugue*, as it happens) of the great man's work being 'contemporary forever'.

Benedict Clift
Dundee, Tayside

Frank Boardman is certainly not the first to have noticed the 'jazzy nature' of Op 111. In her programme notes to her recording of the three last sonatas in 2006, Mitsuko Uchida writes that 'the third [variation]...is difficult to hear today without thinking of jazz or even boogie-woogie.' I'm sure others will have noted it well before this date.

Huw Kyffin, Canterbury

Editor's comment: See Classics Revisited on page 100 for further discussion of this work

Unlovable Kagel

Good on Fabrice Fitch for questioning whether the 'rather unlovable' piano trios of Mauricio Kagel bear repeated listening (June, page 56). I'd go further: when there's so much thoughtfully conceived and intelligently presented new music available on which to spend our hard-earned cash, should we even give the time of day to, in Fitch's words, the 'inane nurdling' of someone who 'wrote music designed to irritate'? Indeed, one wonders whether lovers of this 'unlovable' genre hear in it what's not really there, a sort of musical 'Emperor's New Clothes'.

Barry Borman, via email

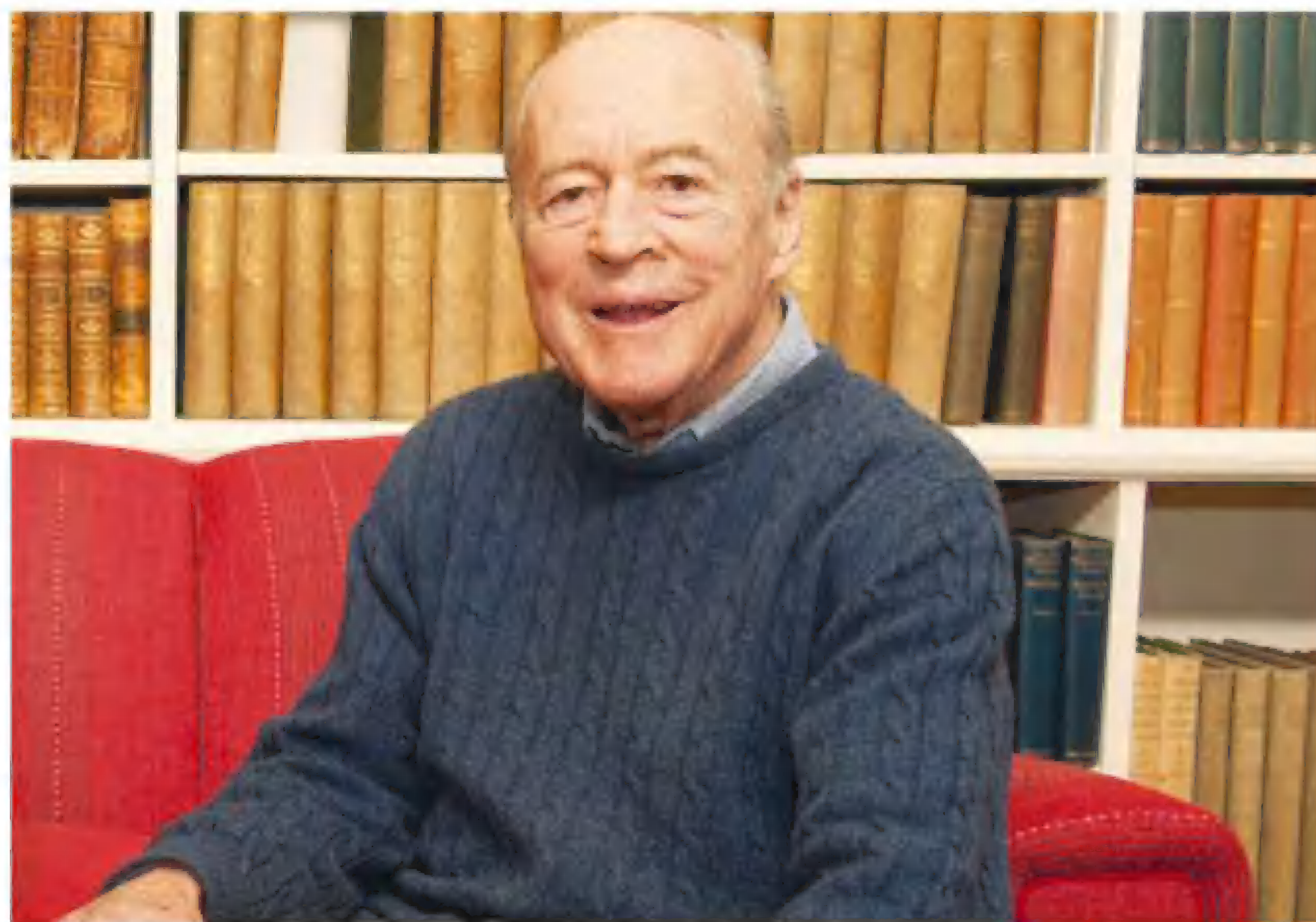
Editorial notes

In the Studio (May, page 39) made mention of Peter Donohoe's new recording of Shostakovich's Preludes and Fugues for Somm Records. The recording will actually be released on Signum Classics.

In Reissues (March, page 80), Jed Distler commented on some 1970s Decca recordings by Bruno Rigutto – the pianist is in fact French, not Italian.

OBITUARIES

Glyndebourne's figurehead; a powerful Bulgarian operatic bass; a British violinist and teacher; a true evangelist for classical music



Natural leader: George Christie was at Glyndebourne's helm for 41 years

GEORGE CHRISTIE

Chairman of Glyndebourne

Born December 31, 1934
Died May 7, 2014

Sir George Christie, for many years the Chairman of Glyndebourne, has died at 79. The son of Glyndebourne's founders John Christie and Audrey Mildmay, George stepped into the Chairman's shoes aged 23 and, in the 41 years that he led the enterprise, he created an international opera house which survived without a penny of public subsidy.

Educated at Eton and Cambridge, where he read Italian and German though failed to take his degree, Christie's first

job was overseeing the distribution of grants from the Gulbenkian Foundation.

In 1968, Christie launched Glyndebourne Touring Opera which not only allowed Glyndebourne productions to be seen beyond the Festival itself but also gave performing opportunities to a host of younger artists. He followed this in 1986 with a highly successful education programme. In 1994, at the cost of £33m, Christie oversaw the building of a new theatre at Glyndebourne seating 1200. He was knighted in 1984 and received the Companion of Honour in 2001. The 2014 Glyndebourne Festival will be dedicated to his memory.

NICOLA GHIUSELEV

Bass

Born August 17, 1936; died May 16, 2014

Like his Bulgarian compatriot Boris Christoff, Ghiuselev was a singer whose stage presence and impressive voice secured him a regular place in the great operas houses of the world. A noted Boris Godunov, it was as Pimen in the same opera that he was often heard in his early operatic career, and this was a role he later sang at the Salzburg Festival under Karajan. His Met debut came in 1965 as Ramfis in *Aida*.

Ghiuselev's British debut occurred in 1971 when he appeared at the Proms in Shostakovich's Symphony No 4 under



Impressive stage presence: bass Nicola Ghiuselev

John Pritchard (he would return eight years later and sing the work again with Gennadi Rozhdestvensky conducting).

Ghiuselev made his Covent Garden debut in 1976 in Verdi's *I Lombardi* opposite José Carreras, and he returned in 1980 for *Les contes d'Hoffmann*. His Boris was heard there in 1984 and in 1990 he sang Galitsky in Borodin's *Prince Igor*.

On record Ghiuselev recorded Gremin (*Eugene Onegin*) and Galitsky (*Igor*) both under the baton of Emil Tchakarov, the title-role in Glinka's *Ivan Susanin* under Ivan Marinov, Dosifey in Mussorgsky's *Khovanshchina* conducted by Atanas Margaritov and Marcel in the Decca set of Meyerbeer's *Les Huguenots* with Joan Sutherland and Richard Bonyngé.

ROBERT MASTERS

Violinist and teacher

Born March 16, 1917; died April 22, 2014

Masters studied at the Royal Academy of Music in London where, aged 30, he was appointed Professor of Violin. He performed with his own Robert Masters Piano Quartet and also as Leader of the London Mozart Players. In the late 1950s he created an orchestra to perform and record with Yehudi Menuhin – the ensemble would be variously known as the Robert Masters Chamber Orchestra, the Bath Festival Orchestra and the Menuhin Festival Orchestra (a young Jacqueline de Pré would later play in the cello section).

In 1963, Masters and his wife Noel helped Menuhin create and establish the Yehudi Menuhin School where Masters



Robert Masters: an influential violinist and teacher

taught for 18 years and was Director of Music from 1969 until his retirement in 1981. He also established the Menuhin International Violin Competition in 1983.

ANTONY HOPKINS

Composer, pianist, conductor, writer and broadcaster

Born March 21, 1921; died May 6, 2014

Responsible for introducing countless people to classical music through his *Talking About...* music programmes, first on the BBC's Third Programme, then on Radio 3 and finally on Radio 4, Hopkins was a true evangelist. After study at Morley College, where he came into contact with Michael Tippett, Hopkins

started his musical life writing music for radio and stage plays.

In 1953, Hopkins gave a talk on the radio about a Bach fugue which prompted Roger Fiske, a BBC producer and *Gramophone* critic, to offer him carte blanche – Hopkins suggested a half-hour programme, *Talking About Music*. It ran from 1954-92. Divine Art released 'A Portrait of Antony Hopkins' in 2012, which includes his piano, chamber and vocal works.



Born entertainer: Antony Hopkins, playing the piano for Sheila Hancock and Dudley Moore in 1972

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Ben Folds

The Ben Folds Five frontman and songwriter on the influences behind his Piano Concerto

I took piano lessons from the babysitter for a year when I was nine, and I got better than her pretty quickly. And at that time I was reading the music, and it was all going in a lot faster than it does now, I can tell you that! But my serious discipline was percussion – that's how I paid for my college, I got scholarships, and that's what I worked like a fiend on. But the piano was something I did to bring out the songs I was hearing in my head, it became a song-writing tool. So by the time I was 10 years old I was just writing songs, I wasn't learning anything – I'm surprised I can play at all when I think about the lack of scales and arpeggios, exercises, sight-reading and technique...

I'm a left-handed drummer and that's the way I play the piano – all the emphasis is always going to be on the left hand. As a rock'n'roll piano player, that came in handy because it gave me a solid rhythmical left hand. But classical music – especially when you get up to the early 20th century – is surprisingly hip in syncopation; I'm not sure that was ever pointed out to me but it's something I've learned as an adult. I love seeing where there's great rhythm in classical music.

Using strings in my music was an expensive habit! In fact the first Ben Folds Five record has a piecemeal string quartet put together by a student on the last track of the album. But as we could afford it more we did it more. And I learnt how to arrange strings for rock band that way – the arranger Paul Buckmaster has taught me a lot since then. I just find it moving when it's done well – in rock'n'roll you do these overdub sessions where you kind of fill out the music, and it's always bothered me because it's not harmonically satisfying. So I like bringing in strings because you can tell the story with the strings, but it's also more measured, there's a way of articulating it so it really sits in the track.

My Piano Concerto came about in the way most of what I do comes about – it just happened. It was discussed over dinner with the head of the Nashville Ballet, and I don't know if he suggested it or if someone over the table suggested it, but anyway I said 'Yeah, I'll do it!' And I went down a crazy path for 18 months while I was working on it.

I listened to string quartets until I was turning blue – there's a Beethoven quartet, and the Ravel, which I've come to love like they're pop songs. Then I started listening to piano concertos. I really connect to those from the early 20th century – Rachmaninov, Bartók and Ravel. I like Gershwin's a lot – I had a feeling I was heading that way, it made sense to me. I just listened everywhere, and after months of a diet of waking up and sitting between the speakers, I started getting scores to the concertos that I really loved. And that's when I started working on my piece.



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It's romantic, playful, sad, hopeful, funny and dark all at once...to me it's perfect.

The context, the atmosphere that I would like to think that I have created in my concerto is this: I live now, and I'm me and I play piano. And I can do things that a lot of classical piano players would find difficult, and I can do almost nothing that they can do. So if I take a quote of some kind, or tip my hat to a 'classical' composer, it's a needle drop, it's sampling, it's a rap artist putting a Queen beat underneath his rap for a couple of minutes, or sampling a little bit of *Annie* or something. That's the way I feel that it is. There are moments when you think 'Boom, it's gone Russian all of a sudden, oh it's gone French, oh there it is, now it sounds like Copland.' I know that's going on all over the place. I could have curbed it, but I felt like this is where I am in my life, I'm sampling all this music and I'm enjoying it.

Now I have to practise it – my do I have to practise! It's not an easy piece to play. But my great dream would be that, after I perform it, it gets played by someone else at some point – that would be amazing. **G**

Ben Folds is touring his Piano Concerto in the US, UK and Europe throughout June, July and August. Details: benfolds.com



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